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My mother's churches ... p.12

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MAY 03 2004

Creation as fellow
creature p.15

New life out of death: the gift of another's organ

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

John* and Linda* hope that National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week (April 18-24) will convince Canadians to donate their organs and tissue after death.

According to Canada's National Organ and Tissue Information Site, Canada's organ donation rate ranks in the bottom half of countries in the western world where transplants are performed. As a result, every year nearly 150 of the approximately 3,500 Canadians waiting for an organ transplant die.

John and Linda realize that these statistics aren't simply cold, hard facts. They communicate the day-to-day reality of numerous Canadians — people like themselves.

John's Story

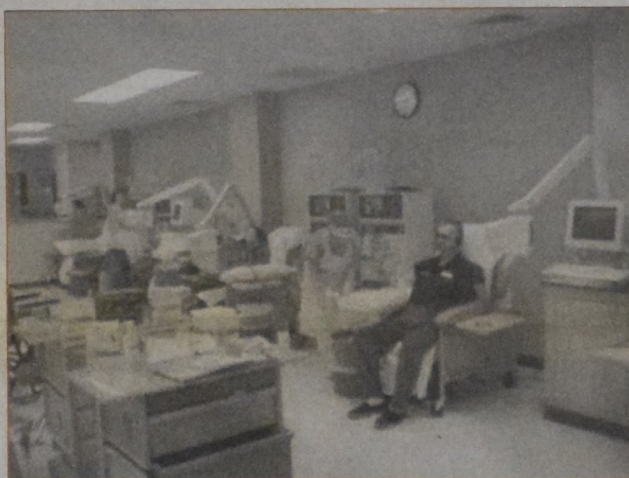
John will be celebrating something besides his 74th birthday during National Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness Week.

A year ago, he underwent a successful kidney transplant and his life was dramatically changed.

Five years earlier he had been a fit retiree and had rarely been sick. However, in 1998 his health rapidly deteriorated when his kidney failed due to systemic vasculitis. Three times weekly hemodialysis at a local hospital became a part of his routine.

For four hours at a stretch, John was hooked up to an artificial kidney machine that cleaned his blood.

After 8 months his health improved and he was offered the opportunity to become part of a self-care dialysis program. John explains, "Through a training program which was totally confusing at first, I learned to set up the machine by myself. The support staff got the supplies ready for the other self-care patients and me. When I had set up the machine, the nurse came



Dialysis unit

to do her part in the process. This way, instead of having one nurse for two patients, they had one nurse for five patients."

John was placed on the transplant list after undergoing a series of tests and evaluations, as well

as a consultation outlining the pros and cons of a transplant. Annual testing followed as he waited for the right match.

Though John waited several years, he didn't experience the delay as long and tedious.

"Perhaps, the fact that I took an interest in the people around me and attempted to build relationships with hospital staff and patients helped me to keep the focus off myself and so minimized my personal problems," he says.

On Easter Sunday 2003, after celebrating his upcoming birthday with his wife, children, and grandchildren, John's wait ended. Everyone had gone home. The phone rang. A kidney was available! John was instructed to come to the hospital immediately.

"I will never forget that day," he says. "What a surprise! I was totally shocked and bewildered."

On April 21, 2003 John received a healthy kidney.

"The Lord is my shepherd"

Later, in the recovery room as he slowly awakened out of the anesthetic, he remembers quoting Scripture passages. "The Lord is

Continued on page 2...

Group proposes alternative to redefining marriage

Margaret Dinsdale

In the face of the flood of Canadian and foreign same-sex couples marrying in city halls in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia after court rulings in those provinces permitting such unions, a group organized as the Working Group on Civil Unions has applied for intervenor status when this issue comes before the Supreme Court of Canada sometime this fall.

The Working Group on Civil Unions issued a press release on April 6 stating that, given that the Supreme Court has ruled that the man-woman definition of marriage is incompatible with the requirement of equality of the Charter of

Rights and Freedoms, instead of opening marriage to same-sex couples the government create a category called civil unions. "The civil union proposal," says a press release, "would replace the concept of civil marriages, and would apply to all couples, opposite-sex and same-sex, wishing to enter a legally recognized civil union.... The Working Group on Civil Unions believes that the civil union alternative to the redefinition of marriage is a legitimate legislative choice, consistent with the dictates of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

The Working Group includes Dr. Jonathan Chaplin, Associate Professor of Political Theory at

the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, Dr. John Hiemstra, a political scientist in Edmonton, Dr. Beth Posterski of Tyndale University College and Seminary in Toronto, Dr. John Redekop, a political scientist in Abbotsford, BC, Dr. Glenn B. Smith of Montreal, Janet Somerville, a former editor of Catholic New Times in Toronto, Mark Vander Vennen, executive coordinator of a child service agency in Cobourg, Ontario, and Gerald Vandezande, C.M., Convenor.

Defining civil unions

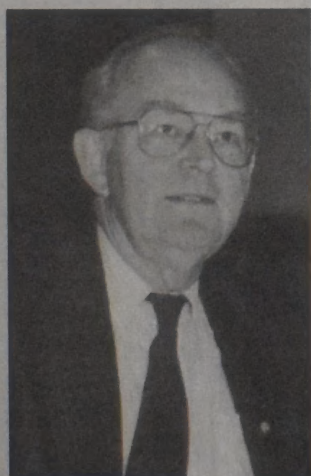
In an interview with Christian Courier, Dr. Chaplin said that he is supporting this initiative that would

offer civil unions instead of expanding the definition of marriage to include everybody.

"Unfortunately, there are some people who miss the point of this initiative," he explained. "It is not to retain a second tier for gays and lesbians but to have criteria of equality. It doesn't restrict current options for living, and churches can communicate in public any view they wish. Parliament would regulate household situations, taxes, divorce and adoption issues, for example."

The Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG) of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in its explanation of a brief

See Alternative p. 2...

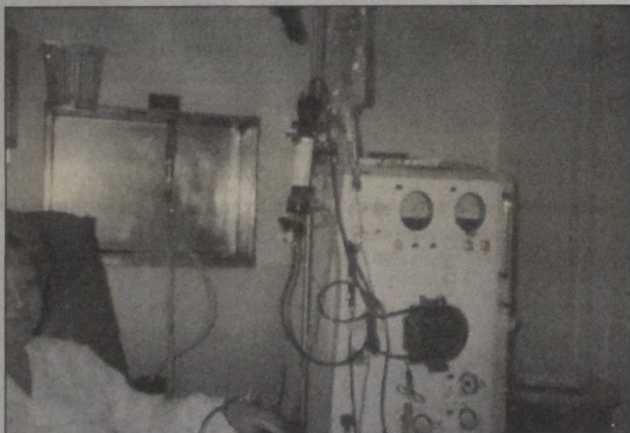


Gerald Vandezande

News

my shepherd kept coming up', he says. "It meant something to me because it shows that your subconscious is busy making connections with the Lord. I found that reassuring and uplifting."

Receiving an organ transplant was an emotional experience for several reasons, John says. "The day I came through the operation was my birthday. Then there was the fact that somebody had died and designated his body parts to be used for transplants. That had a huge impact on me. There was nothing I could do about the fact that the person died. I was thankful that I got what I got, but at the same time I wondered how the dead person's family was coping."



Dialysis machine

Having gone through this experience, John wants Canadians to realize the importance of designating their organs and tissue for donation after their death. "Those who donate have the happiness of other unfortunate people in their hands," he asserts.

John has often wondered how the person who donated the kidney to him came to that decision. Was it because of the request for organ donors on his driver's licence? Was it because he read something about it in the media? Did his family agree to it because they had read about the need for organ donors? John will likely never know. But he hopes that many more Canadians decide to do what his benefactor did.

Linda's Story

In May 1993 when Linda's daughter Chantal was 5-years-old, she developed a condition called Nephrotic Syndrome that affects 16 out of 100,000 children. The

syndrome causes large amounts of protein to leak from the blood into the kidney, resulting in fluid accumulation and swelling, according to Linda.

"I knew that there was a problem when Chantal woke up and could hardly open her eyes due to the swelling," she recalls. "Within 3 weeks she gained 20 lbs. since initially she didn't respond to the diuretics to rid the body of excess fluid."

Though Nephrotic Syndrome is treatable in 90% of cases within the first month, with occasional relapses in childhood, Chantal did not respond to the treatment of steroids and her prognosis was poor, Linda says.

"As a parent I was devastated. I had a perfectly healthy 5-year-

Chantal spent 5 months in hospital struggling to stay alive.

Later, in Sept. 1998, Chantal's treatment with peritoneal dialysis continued. Because of her lack of appetite, she had a gastric tube inserted in her stomach which she still has today. For nourishment she receives 1-2 cans of liquid food supplements daily.

In 1999 Chantal was again eligible for a transplant. However, doctors warned that there was a 50% chance of Nephrotic Syndrome recurring and attacking the transplanted kidney. Also, since she had developed very high antibody levels, finding a match for her was unlikely.

After 5 years of peritoneal dialysis, Chantal experienced problems with fluid removal. Five surgeries in the last year didn't correct the problem.

New government program

"We had no choice but for her to have hemodialysis, which was not done for children at our local hospital," Linda explains. In 2002, Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children received government funding to begin a nocturnal (nighttime) hemodialysis program. Chantal and her parents were accepted into the program.

"In May 2003 Chantal had a central line catheter inserted near her heart which is used to access her blood for hemodialysis," Linda explains. Kirby and Linda completed a six week training program. In July 2003, after installation of government-funded equipment, Chantal, 16, became the second North American child to be on nocturnal hemodialysis.

This has involved an enormous transition for Linda and Kirby. While it took approximately 15 minutes to set up her peritoneal dialysis, setting up her hemodialysis takes one hour and is an extremely technical procedure.

"My first thought was - where are we going to find the time in our already busy lives to fit that in?" Linda says. "I soon discovered that for anything in life that is important, you make the time. It really has not been that difficult especially because of the results we've seen. Chantal has improved much beyond our expectations and that of her physicians. Her blood results are close to normal for the first time and she has energy to get through the day."

Greatest fears

Doctors informed Linda and her husband, Kirby, that there was a 30% chance that Chantal's disease would attack the transplanted kidney. Their greatest fears were realized. When her kidney started producing urine loaded with protein, the transplanted kidney was eventually destroyed.

Alternative

...continued from p.1

presented to the government last year pointed out that the support for civil unions "is not about whether homosexual behaviour is appropriate or 'moral', but whether the long-term interdependent relationships of lesbian and gay couples should have similar legal obligations and protections as those applied to marriage.... We live in a pluralistic society where the government is called by God to promote justice among and for all its citizens - the integrity of the church's public witness depends on acknowledging these realities of plurality and justice while maintaining commitment to Biblical teaching on homosexuality and marriage."

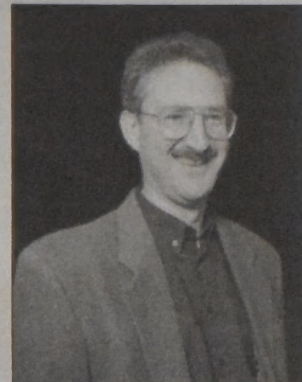
Although governments make laws about marriage, the brief argued, it did not create it. Marriage existed before there were governments. But marriage isn't the only kind of relationship recognized and protected by law; it also, for example protects common law relationships. But redefining marriage to include a wider array of relationships will not produce equality: "Marriage between a man and woman is a unique relationship. Redefining marriage to include other sexually intimate interdependent relationships, as if they are all the same, threatens to change the institution of marriage and undermine its benefits through which it has served individuals and communities throughout history."

The CCG paper concluded:

God in kindness of others

Linda would never wish her experience on anyone. However, Chantal's illness has helped Linda to let go of control and trust God to see their family through each crisis. "Though our prayers were not answered as we had hoped, I have seen God's presence in the kindness that others have shown us. But most of all, I have experienced the grace and peace to handle each new challenge. I am not afraid of my tomorrows and have learned to cherish each day."

As a volunteer for the Kidney Foundation, Linda has spoken publicly to increase awareness about the need for organ and tissue donation. "Anyone can be at the receiving end of requiring an organ," she says.



Dr. Jonathan Chaplin

"The equality concerns raised by the courts can be addressed by the creation of a new law that protects the vulnerable in other interdependent relationships (possibly called 'civil unions' or 'registered domestic partnerships'). This law should enable consenting adults who wish to live in such long-term relationships to choose to submit to a set of legal rights and obligations similar to the legal rights and obligations of married couples. This new law should in no way redefine legal marriage."

While the CCG envisioned a category of civil unions alongside of traditional marriage, the Working Group proposes civil unions as a catch-all category within which traditional marriage would be preserved intact.

Reject separate but equal

Not surprisingly, there are those in the gay community who are opposed to the concept of civil

Continued on page 3...

Linda stresses that signing an organ donor card and/or driver's licence is not enough. Individuals need to openly communicate with family members about their desire to be donors in the event of death. Because death is a topic not easily broached by many, people often also avoid talking about organ donation. She explains that if a potential donor is found, the family is approached and asked to make the decision about organ donation regardless of the deceased person's wishes.

"In the midst of a tragedy, the decision is much easier to make if the issue has previously been discussed," Linda remarks.

(Because all information about donors and recipients is strictly confidential, last names have not been included.)

Politics

union, who want access to the "one of the most prominent institutions in our society."

"We find the concept of civil unions to be the separate but equal doctrine rightly rejected in the United States and Ontario," says Laurie Arron, director of advocacy for EGale (Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere). "If we want to get married, why not have that choice. Our children do not deserve to feel that their families are symbolically excluded. Civil union is a compromise to a divisive issue. We want the sign taken off the door of marriage that says no fags or dykes."

The rights without the baggage

But not all of the gay and lesbian community is on board for access to marriage, there is a faction that is happy to buy out of the traditional forms of marriage. In an article in the *Globe and Mail* on April 7, Mitchel Raphael, an editor with a gay magazine, *fab*, wrote: "Choosing a new term for same-sex couples uniting means gays can create their own rules for partnership with all the rights of traditional marriage but without its baggage of eternal monogamy and 50-percent divorce rates.... The real threat to the traditional institution of marriage may be the lack of straight people still supporting it."

However, many same-sex couples have been tying the knot since last summer. About 700 couples have married in British

Columbia and, in the city of Toronto, 1,114 same-sex marriage licenses were issued between June last year and February of this year.

The important matters of the law

But many look to the strengthening of relationships by offering options to all. Gerald Vandezande, convenor of the Working Group thinks that because marriage is not always what it ought to be doesn't mean it should be abolished.

"Instead, all concerns about the health and quality of committed relationships should indeed carefully examine just what they themselves can contribute to the strengthening of marriage and all human relationships and how, we together, can practice faithfulness, justice, love and compassion as Jesus challenged us to do," he said.

As for those who, for a variety of reasons, are opposed to offering same-sex couples any sort of formal recognition of their relationships, Mr. Vandezande quoted Matthew 23:23 to underline his point. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."

[Note: the CCG is not a member of the Working Group on Civil Unions.]

Why would gay marriage harm traditional marriage?

In a recent post on *Christianity Today* online, Robert Benne and Gerald McDermott, professors of religion at Roanoke College address the question, How would the legalization of gay marriage harm current and future heterosexual marriages?

They argue that it would be bad for marriage, bad for children, and bad for society.

Study in The Netherlands

"Scrambling the definition of marriage will be a shock to our fundamental understanding of human social relations and institutions. One effect will be that sexual fidelity will be detached from the commitment of marriage." In the traditional understanding, marriage is not based on the subjective feelings of the partners or simply on a mutual agreement to stay together; it involves entering into an institution that involves lifelong commitment and fidelity between a man and a woman.

They point to a study in the Netherlands, where gay marriage is legal, that shows gay unions between men are even more unstable than heterosexual marriage has become, with men in so-called "monogamous" relationships having an average of eight partners per year outside the relationship.

It would be bad for children because children raised in a same-sex setting are more uncertain about their sexual identity. Many boys especially around the age of 12 experience uncertainty about their sexual orientation, and gay marriage encourages experimentation.

And "acceptance of gay marriage will strengthen the notion that marriage is primarily about adult yearnings for intimacy and is not essentially connected to raising children. Children will be hurt by those who will too easily bail out of a marriage because it is not 'fulfilling' to them."

Gay marriage would be bad for society, too, the writers say: "The effects ... will have strong repercussions on a society that is already having trouble maintaining wholesome stability in marriage and family life. If marriage and families are the foundation for a healthy society, introducing more uncertainty and instability in them will be bad for society."

Civil unions and justice

Quite a number of Christian leaders support civil unions but oppose same-sex marriage, reported *Christianity Today*. They see civil unions as a means of economic justice - but not just for homosexuals. In fact, they would rather see such legislation avoid mention of sexuality altogether.

"It may well be that for the sake of public justice we need to recognize different kinds of households, but I would never start that by primary reference to so-called gay households," said Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, professor of psychology and philosophy at Eastern University. "[Civil unions] could include things like single people looking after aging parents. It could include, as in my own family, two bachelor brothers and a sister who ran a farm their whole life."

Defined this way, she says, civil unions would actually preserve the uniqueness of marriage.

Van Leeuwen suggests, however, that same-sex marriages may have unforeseen conse-

quences just as the liberalization of divorce: it may well result in less involvement of men in the raising of children and more children being raised in households consisting of two women.

Fuller Theological Seminary president Richard Mouw, says gay marriage is much more than an oxymoron. "It is not only inappropriate, but it is dangerously sinful to describe a relationship between two persons of the same gender as a marriage," he said. "And the state simply ought not to legislate that kind of arrangement and build that kind of arrangement into our system of social life."

Marriage, he says, "isn't created by human contracts, but it is something that was created by God as a life long faithful partnership between a man and a woman. One of the major goals that marriage serves is to propagate the human race and to promote healthy families within that propagation, but also to model the mental faithfulness between God and his people, and Christ and his church."



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Justice Laforme


The Justice Minister condemns 'separate but equal'

As noted by Justice Laforme in the recent Ontario equal marriage decision: any "alternative status" that nonetheless provides for the same financial benefits as marriage in and of itself amounts to segregation. This case is about access to a deeply meaningful institution - it is about equal participation in the activity, expression, security, and integrity of marriage. Any "alternative" to marriage,

in my opinion simply offers the insult of formal equivalency without the Charter promise of substantive equality.

Justice Laforme further stated that: One cannot avoid the conclusion that offering benefits to gay and lesbian partners under a different scheme from heterosexual partners is a version of the separate but equal doctrine. That appalling doctrine must not be resuscitated in Canada four decades after its much-heralded death in the United States.

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Editorial

War, politics and looking for the big picture

Harry der Nederlanden

After watching the TV images of the terrible turmoil in Iraq in early April and of the hearings of the 9-11 commission in the US, it seems impossible not to talk about the US and Iraq this issue. To follow what happens day by day is a bit too much for my system. Every few days I had to give myself a day off from watching and reading the news to spare my constitution.

I can only imagine what it means to be a soldier or part of the administration and to live with this tension day after day. That Americans are inclined to snipe at their government for getting them into this situation and to look back and ask, "Was this the way to go?" strikes me as completely understandable.

In fact, I'm surprised at the patience of the American people, especially after the gruesome desecration of American corpses in Fallujah. "Don't go off half-cocked and strike back with a hammer!" I urged the television screen. (Yeah, the evening news has me talking back to my television.) At the same time, my fists were clenched and the urge to strike the perpetrators who were dragging around body parts chanting "We are brave!" was unnerving. To be a soldier or an officer in Iraq must require huge discipline, for they must continue to see the Iraqi people with affection while anticipating death from their hands.

For Iraqis, for the ordinary folk who only want life to be normal so they can raise their children in peace, the situation is even more difficult. What will the day bring? Will the actions of some militant among them or of some angry young man trigger American retaliation so they get caught in the crossfire? Why can't those wealthy Americans do more to improve their lives? What is actually happening on the higher levels of government? Who do you believe: the words of angry clerics counseling resistance or the words of those who (they say) are American puppets?

Are the Americans really here to help or are they here for their own selfish reasons? Meanwhile, Iraqi newspapers and Al Jazeera TV broadcast images and charges of American atrocities and wicked intentions.

Could it have been prevented?

Meanwhile, back in the US images of violence and death in Iraq alternate with images of government officials testifying before the 9-11 commission. What the commission is discovering – according to the *New York Times* (always eager to make the Bush administration look like a bunch of fools) – is that 9-11 could have been prevented, that the government has lied and lied again, and that there's no reason on earth that American young men and women should be dying in Iraq.

From what I have been able to gather following the testimony of Richard Clarke, Condoleezza Rice and others as they spin and interpret words spoken and actions taken in the months and years prior to 9-11, the terrorist attack could perhaps have been prevented – IF America had become a very different country from what it was. In fact, it still has not become sufficiently closed and security oriented according to many experts. Even after 9-11 most Americans are not willing to any great extent to surrender the freedoms to which they are accustomed, least of all the Bush bashers. Again and again, terrorist "experts" appear on television to describe different weak points where terrorists could strike, from water reservoirs to the electrical grid and the Internet. Sometimes I say, "Shut up! You're giving them all kinds of good ideas."

No doubt some of the critics are partly right. Before 9-11 perhaps the Bush administration did not take the clues to Al Qaeda's intentions with sufficient urgency. They did take them seriously, but what level of preparedness would have been sufficient? They probably took the threat more seriously than the public at large, however, and it would have been very, very hard to convince the American public to accept all sorts of restrictions in the name of a vague threat. Moreover, the more successful the authorities would have been in preventing terrorist acts, the more convinced the people would have become that the measures were unnecessary. Not just people hailing from the Middle East would have cried "Police state!" but so would the ACLU and libertarian conservatives. The government would have been attacked from both the right and the left. That's the "weakness" of a liberal democracy.

In retrospect, which confers 20-20 vision, the clues undoubtedly leap out of the mass like pieces of a puzzle sprayed with fluorescent paint. We can only begin to imagine the vast mass of data in which these clues – scattered here and there – must have been embedded. They'd have been almost as hard to find as the infamous Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Admiration and disbelief

Yet, every day as people die trying to bring order in Iraq, we see the fiasco of a former senior bureaucrat, Richard Clarke, and Bush's present national security advisor Condoleezza Rice spinning words, expounding nuances of meaning and emphasis, as they argue about the great hypothetical 'What if....' A strange bit of political theater for a nation at war. "Only in America," I say, shaking my head, with a mixture of admiration and disbelief.

Although a review of security and intelligence prior to 9-11 was called for, to turn the process into a public spectacle with its inevitable politicalization, strikes me as almost ludicrous. It is good theater. A spurned bureaucrat with a big ego plugging his book about the inner workings of American intelligence gets a chance to put those who bruised him on the spot for the entire nation to see. The

former boss who spurned him is forced to sweat and squirm before the merciless cameras to ... to do what? Argue that the government was sufficiently vigilant? A hard case to make, since it was unable to prevent the attacks.

Even with heightened security, the experts that I saw interviewed had to admit, it was extremely unlikely that 9-11 would have been prevented. It would have required a harmonious and efficient cooperation between the FBI, the CIA, the FAA and other levels of security (something even Clarke never achieved), much more stringent controls at airports, closer surveillance of US citizens, and several ladles of good luck, some of them added.

Yet, the unhealthy exercise of apportioning some of the blame for 9-11 to various American politicians and bureaucrats was still going on as I write this. If something catastrophic happens in America, it seems, there has to be someone to blame or to sue; in this case, the cunning of the Islamist terrorists seems to have been forgotten.

The fact that Americans insist that such a hearing proceed as if it's politics as usual lends strong support to the contention that before 9-11 any squeeze on freedoms in the name of security would not have been tolerated. Americans felt quite secure, thank you, back then. Even after that 'innocence' or complacency was pulverized, they have not been willing to give up very much of their precious way of life.

On the other hand, they've been willing to give up considerably more than we Canadians. They have already sacrificed the lives of over 500 of their young men and women. Recently the evening news carried the story of three sisters, all serving in Iraq as part of the National Guard. One of the girls had been killed during the violence sparked by Al Sadr. Her two sisters were home for the funeral, and her mother talked about how proud she was of her daughters and their willingness to serve their country and help defend their freedom.

Gullible? Perhaps. Or perhaps we have yet to begin to understand the threat that militant Islam represents, not just to the US but to the West as a whole. For this is not a threat that emerged after 9-11 and after the invasion of Iraq. Militant, so-called fundamentalist Islam has long been brewing up its concoction of religion, hatred and violence, not just in Islamic countries but also in many European countries. And the pot in which this concoction is being brewed is not just that of poverty, racism, and injured national pride; it is an ideology rooted in Islamic religion, perversely perhaps, but Islam seems to have weak defenses against it.

As Paul Marshall warned some time ago: "Islamist terrorists are not fighting for third world liberation. As they announce repeatedly, they are messianic organizations explicitly fighting to restore a pan-Islamic Caliphate governed by Islamic law. Throughout the world, they methodically kill people opposed to the Caliphate, whether UN or non-UN, Muslim or non-Muslim, left or right, American, British, Israeli, French or Australian."

In his testimony before the 9-11 commission, Clarke quoted Bush as saying he was tired of "swatting flies," that is, reacting to individual acts of terrorism one by one as they happen. Before 9-11 his advisors, including the infamous neocons, were busy trying to map out a strategy that would address the roots of this militant radicalism. Supplanting a tyrannical regime in the middle of the breeding ground and planting a seed of democracy was part of that bold and perhaps presumptuous plan. It is, I fear, a plan that overreaches, and if it succeeds, it will be a miracle.

For lack of a better plan, I pray that the miracle succeeds and that when the American troops withdraw, they will leave behind not hatred but the germ of a better way.

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Letters

It's all about the limits of tolerance

My previous letter to the Editor (about the question whether Allah is the same God as the God of Christianity) was printed with a reply by the Editor. His reply prompted me to write another letter, this time specifically about tolerance in our circles that is also sometimes carried too far.

In the March 1 issue was an article by Tony Campolo in which this much respected, witty and learned evangelical professor writes: "...we Christians, along with our Jewish and Muslim brothers and sisters, wait earnestly for the Messiah to come and join us."

I find that astounding. Those who are true Christians in whatever denomination are my brothers and sisters. Jews and Muslims are not. They can be my friends, my neighbors and have my respect. But my brothers and sisters they are not, and nor do they wait along with us for the same Messiah to come and join us. Our Messiah, the Messiah, has already come.

Dr. Campolo is too tolerant; he expresses ideas that cannot be tolerated.

The winter issue of "Forum" [sent by Calvin Theological Seminary to all CRC churches] contains two articles that speak to this issue of tolerance. Dr. Roger Greenway, retired professor of Missions,

writes: "It is the ethos of pluralism that threatens the foundation of Christianity in America. People who have this mindset laud tolerance, but are vigorously intolerant of anyone who insists on one God, one Savior, one Scripture, and one way to the Father." He concludes: "Theological pluralism has deadly consequences for God's people. Pluralism is like cancer. It starts small and it may spread slowly. But in the end it will kill you if not removed."

In the same issue Prof. Dean Deppe writes: "Our culture is promoting a subtle message about how to live together. 'Set aside your differences. Truth is bigger than the both of you, worship together you all serve the same God.'"

He adds: "Tolerance is being redefined before our eyes. Instead of meaning respect for another's belief, now tolerance means considering another's conviction and life style decisions of equal value to mine." And further: "The popular concept of unity is fantasy land, where disagreements never surface and contrary opinions are never stated with force."

It was for that reason that I wrote in my previous letter that "to begin evangelism with a fallacy cannot be tolerated."

One remark yet about the Editor's reply

to my previous letter. I suppose he addresses the question, how then do we evangelize, by writing that he agrees with me, "but there are degrees of knowledge." He writes then about how Paul addresses the Athenians in the context of their altar to the unknown God. In this address Paul indeed refers to what you could call a "degree of knowledge" (Acts 17:27, 28), but he goes straight forward to the message that the only God is he who created the heavens and the earth and he steers his whole message without further ado towards the Gospel Truth of the resurrected Christ. No tolerance there.

Might Paul's approach be what our Editor calls "a rich notion for evangelism?" Perhaps. One has to try and find a point where you can connect with your non-Christian friend.

In the March 29 issue (front and second page article on Campus Ministry) Chaplain Den Haan sees "spirituality" as a vibrant part of most students' lives. For him that is the door to his ministry on Campus. Yes, a door. But I am sure not a door to a show of tolerance of the kind of spirituality that is so prevalent in our New Age culture. [Letter edited for length.]

Lammert Slofstra
Surrey, B.C.

I like hymns too

Allow me to quickly comment on a remark made by Bert Grasman in the March 29 issue's Letters. He mentioned his love for older hymns, writing, "...it would be so nice for us older people to be allowed to express some of our feelings toward and about our Father in the way we were taught and grew to love." Although I am only 23 years old, I agree with him, as do many of my generation. Please don't assume that all of "the youth" have a problem with hymns: some of us actually prefer them!

The solution here seems to be for churches to participate in a combination of both new and old music. There is room for both quiet meditation and joyful praise. After all, variety is the spice of all stages of life.

Naomi Biesheuvel
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Thanks, and right you are. In fact, the gray hymnal we have in the pews of most CRC churches is really a hymnal of hymnals gathered from many periods, different countries and cultures and exemplifying a great variety of styles.

It's already more of a smorgasbord than a monolithic unity, and different generations are probably attached to different favorites.

The editor

Did the author confuse legal and ecclesiastical responsibilities?

I want to take issue with the position taken by Mr. Van der Woerd in CC, March 15 on his take on the role of the State and the Church in the case of someone who was sexually abused. What Mr. van der Woerd does not seem to understand is do sexual abuse is always a criminal, legal matter, not an ecclesiastical or spiritual matter. If the church did not immediately involve the police upon becoming aware of the charges of abuse then the church was negligent in its duty to the abused member. Yes the church must play a role in seeking healing but the church should not stand in the way of the legal authorities in such instances.

Mr. van der Woerd charges the courts with interpreting Scripture. Such is not the case here. The church in this case went outside its sphere to rule on a criminal/legal matter and chose to replace the legal course of action with an ecclesiastical one. Since when is a criminal act an act to be ruled on by the church? A criminal act is not an internal church matter and cannot be ruled on by the church; criminal acts are for the police and the courts to deal with. Sexual abuse done by anyone, whether a parent or an officer of the church, is a criminal act.

Why Mr. van der Woerd chooses to interpret the court action as a diminishment of the church to regulate its own policies, or an interference in religious freedom. I cannot understand.

John Kamphof
Surrey BC

We print Mr. Kamphof's letter here because he makes the valid point that when child abuse matters are discovered by the church, this must be reported to the authorities. The case discussed by Mr. Van der Woerd, however, involves a civil case about a church's attempt to bring healing to someone who was hurt by abuse that happened years earlier. It did not revolve around the reporting of the initial abuse.

Van der Woerd replies: "Since the church was found to be negligent, perhaps one could argue that they should have limited their involvement to reporting the abuse to the authorities and done nothing more. As Christians we know this is often difficult to do."

"Abuse is more than a legal matter and our beliefs compel us to assist the injured (and those who cause the injuries). In the Boer case, among other things, what was so astonishing was how the court bent over backward to chastise the church for mishandling the situation when they tried to bring healing in a manner that they interpreted to be in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and the court said they misinterpreted those Scriptures."

"It's understandable that Kamphof is disturbed by the article. Whether it's a criminal case or not, sexual abuse is terrible and evokes raw emotions. The church needs to acknowledge the legitimate role of the legal system in dealing with abuse cases, but the courts, too, should refrain from overstepping their boundaries as well."

Thank you Ron de Boer

I just want to send a line or two to say how much I enjoyed reading Ron de Boer's story "Scars." I will let our three sons read it as well since they too have "scars" from their "growing up days."

"Saturday mornings in your first house, in your first year of marriage are supposed to look like the picture in the Canadian

Tire catalogue ... etc." was "priceless" — as I read it to my husband my laughter resulted in tears...!

Thank you Ron de Boer for sharing this, and many of your other stories, they are great.

Lonny Doornbos
St. Catharines, ON

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Church/Politics

Canada CRC tells Americans to vote for Kerry

John Bolt

The people of the United States of America will elect a president in November 2004 for a new four-year term. The incumbent, George W. Bush, will be the standard bearer for the Republicans and, barring unforeseen catastrophe, Senator John Kerry of Massachusetts will be the candidate for the Democratic Party. The American president from 2005 to 2008 will be named Bush or Kerry.

Ordinarily, leaders of the CRC do not tell its members for whom they should vote or which of the specific policies or party platforms are denominationally endorsed. That is properly considered a matter of Christian liberty; thoughtful Christians of good will and can disagree on political matters without violating the bond of communion. With the inclusion of the signature of CRCNA Canadian Ministries Director Rev. Bill Veenstra on a letter sent by the Canadian Council of Churches to Prime Minister Paul Martin that has changed. Now, apparently American CRC members are encouraged to align themselves with Senator Kerry's more Christian proposals, those supported by the CRC and other churches.

I am not making this up; check the CRCNA website for the full contents of this letter. The letter, ostensibly on behalf of Canadian church members, including the CRC, commits itself and pleads with the Canadian government to commit itself to policies that are the bedrock of Senator Kerry's US Senate voting pattern and current campaign platform. Included are unilateral nuclear disarmament and opposition to the strategic defense initiative, the so-called "Star Wars" plan. All this is then linked to specific proposals for eliminating third-world poverty with the stated goal: "A world free from fear and free from want – a world where people live in peace, confident that their basic needs will be met. Canada should pursue security according to this vision."

The alternative vision – peace through strength and resolute determination to root out terrorism and reduce the presence and role of rogue states run by tyrants – President Bush's vision, in other words – apparently does not have the support of the church. I would love to debate this but my question here is rather: "What if we think the letter sent by the churches is dead wrong, that the letter represents a romantic utopianism rather than Reformed Christianity, that President Bush's approach is closer to the right way?" Should those of us who think this way be disciplined for not supporting the church's position in the letter? Or do we just shrug it off with a sense of relief that this is all just so much posturing, nobody pays much attention to all these letters anyway? They may be wrong but thankfully they are also ignored and thus relatively harmless?

Please understand me well. I happen to think the letter to the PM is seriously flawed but I am willing to listen to arguments for it. I object to the church sending the letter at all. Veteran readers of this journal will know that this is for me an old and oft-repeated complaint; I don't want the church shooting off these letters in this manner.

I object because the stakes are so high – for Canada, for freedom, but most of all for the church and for the gospel.

I am an ordained minister of the gospel. When I enter a pulpit I want to be able to say with conviction and passion, "Thus saith the Lord." I want to point out that hearing and responding to the gospel I preach is a matter of life and death. Eternity depends on how my hearers respond. There is an urgency about my calling ("woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!"), and an urgency about the message ("For God's sake, I plead with you, I beseech you, I beg you – *be reconciled to God.*") You must pay attention to what I am saying!

I cannot, I will not, before God, get into a pulpit and say that about unilateral Canadian nuclear disarmament in the face of rogue states run by ruthless tyrants and powerful terrorist networks. Before God, I cannot, I will not give stones for bread.

To see my church community in Canada join others in doing just that thing breaks my heart.

A Letter to the PM and a challenge

My CC article, "Canada CRC tells Americans to Vote for Kerry" will, I know, generate some vigorous protest. One response I anticipate is, "Should the church then say nothing about world terrorism and peace?" Or, "What would you say instead?"

To the first question I would say, yes, perhaps the church should be silent on a whole host of public issues. Better to be silent than to say the wrong thing and bring the gospel itself into disrepute. However, I'll accept the challenge of the sec-

ond question, provide an alternative, and with it lay down a challenge to CC readers: If CC readers will put the two letters side by side and compare them, let them decide which one more clearly represents their views and which one they would support sending to the PM. [The Council's letter appeared in the last issue of CC.]

I will rest by the verdict of CC readers.

John Bolt

*Professor of Systematic Theology at
Calvin Theological Seminary*

Dear Prime Minister,

Greetings on behalf of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada. It is our prayer that God may guide you and bless you richly in the responsibilities of your office as the leader of our nation's government.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA) is a bi-national protestant denomination in the Calvinist tradition. Its roots are in The Netherlands and the large majority of our church members in Canada are directly tied to the large post World War II immigration of Dutch Canadians. The tradition of liberty we inherited from our Dutch ancestors led us to embrace Canada's own legacy of valor and sacrifice for freedom on behalf of others. In particular we remember with gratitude and affection the key role played by the Canadian armed forces in liberating The Netherlands from the tyranny of brutal Nazi occupation.

We now again face the threat of tyranny in the world, this time through a frightening network of world-wide terrorism, a threat potentially more fearsome than that of Nazism and Communism since its devotees believe they are God's anointed and have leave totally to disregard conventions of international law and decency. Inasmuch as the response of the Canadian government involves extraordinarily complex judgments of statecraft and international military action, we wish to be clear that we do not speak to you as yet one more lobby group seeking to lecture the government with our political proposals. We speak as the church of Jesus Christ on the basis of God's revelation in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament and the benefit of wisdom gained in the 2000 year history of the Christian church. From that source we offer the following as convictions of principle and prudence and express some of our concerns to guide Her Majesty's government in these troubling and trying times.

1. We believe that civil governments are God's servants, appointed to serve the public good, to provide security and render justice, to reward good and punish evil, and that to do so, governments legitimately exercise the power of the sword (Romans 13:1-7).

Therefore, we ask you to consider carefully whether the government of Canada has been faithful to its responsibilities in this area. Is military preparedness and national security a priority and is our military adequate to provide secure and safe borders for Canada's citizens? Has our immigration policy kept up with the new challenges of international terrorism? Are our borders secure? Is the federal government's long-standing policy of promoting multiculturalism sufficiently nuanced so that it does not inadvertently contribute to the very subversion of our national order and security?

2. Canada's inherited tradition of common and codified law prizes liberty within order and the rule of law. Signal historical events such as the Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, and Canada's own constitutional history, all suggest that liberty of conscience and free expression of religion are at the heart of a constitutionally-ordered free and prosperous people.

As the government wrestles with how to honor the free-

dom of groups whose tenets include hatred of those freedoms and expressed intent to destroy them, we plead with you to avoid draconian legislation and police action that would infringe upon religious and political freedom of expression and focus attention instead on behavior that violates civil order and is illegal. We remember the FLQ crisis of a generation ago and do not wish to see a repeat of excessive federal government police action against our own citizens.

In addition, in the larger international order, the government of Canada should join other nations who have taken a clear and unequivocal stand against terrorism.

The lead nation here is the United States of America, joined by Great Britain, Australia, The Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Poland and others. We do not suggest uncritical following of the American-led coalition but are concerned that Canada's response thus far signals a less than fully convicted stance against all terrorism. On this basic issue there must be no confusion or equivocation.

3. The same Scriptures that teach us governments are God's servants for the public good, also teach us as subjects and citizens to honor those in authority, to pray for them, to obey them, and to fulfill our duties such as paying our taxes (Romans 13, I Peter 2:13-17). We pledge to you our commitment to be loyal, respectful and dutiful citizens.

In order for honor to be expected it also must be earned. Governments that desire to be respected and honored must themselves act honorably. We express hereby our concern that some members of Her Majesty's government, not only back-benchers but also ministers of the Crown, have expressed themselves publicly in less than honoring ways about the President and government of our neighbor and ally, the United States of America. Not only is angry anti-Americanism a violation of honoring those in authority and a breach of good neighborliness, it also seems to us highly imprudent. We are dependent on the American military for our security and on the good graces of the American people for our well-being. It is in fact a reassuring testimony to the good will and generosity of the American people that the United States remains so friendly to Canada though we often act ungrateful and speak ungraciously about our neighbor. In this respect, we wonder if the Prime Ministers and governments of Great Britain, Australia, The Netherlands, Spain, and Italy have not been more true to the spirit of our own common tradition of sacrifice for liberty and freedom from tyranny than has the government of Canada. Once again, this does not mean uncritical support for every American policy or decision, only a clear affirmation of our friendship and agreement with the goals of freedom and peace through strength. Then, and then alone is respectful dissent possible and valuable.

We pledge to you our loyalty as citizens of Canada and promise our continued prayers for God's Spirit to guide you as you lead our nation.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

On behalf of the Christian Reformed Church in Canada.

Culture

Churches and the Defense of Marriage Amendment

Tony Campolo, Eastern University
St. Davids, PA

The Defense of Marriage Amendment being proposed by the Bush administration is going to be a hot issue in this year's election. The Democrats already are contending that President Bush is introducing this proposal for political purposes and, by so doing, is polarizing the country. The Republicans are quick to point out that they are not the ones who raised the issue of gay marriage, but are simply defending the nation from the onslaught of liberals and their "gay agenda."

Churches are further inflaming the controversy through their own infighting. The argument over gay marriage has put every major denomination in danger of schism. Church leaders have weighed in on both sides of debate, many contending that what is at stake is nothing less than the future of the family.

What is being ignored, however, is that it is not gay people who have put the family in jeopardy. The traditional family is in danger, not because so many gays want to get married, but because so many heterosexuals have chosen to get divorced. In fact, nearly half of new heterosexual marriages now end in divorce. In addition, more than 30% of today's young couples choose to live together without even bothering to get married. Churches, however, have made no headlines around these issues lately. On the contrary, when it comes to divorce, lately we Christians have had little to say.

A double standard?

As I listen to fundamentalist church leaders declare that the Bible requires them to condemn gay marriage, I wonder how they reconcile their claims of full obedience to Scripture with their willingness to welcome those who are divorced and remarried into their congregations. Doesn't Mark 10:11-12 describe Jesus specifically declaring that divorced people who remarry are living in adultery?

If such leaders insist on 'doing the Bible thing', then they ought to at least be consistent. It isn't fair to use the Bible to clobber gays who want to get married without also using it to exclude divorced people who want to get remarried. If they must call their members' gay sons and daughters an abomination to God, should not those

preachers also start condemning the children of their congregants who are living together out of wedlock?

When I ask my fellow evangelicals to explain this obvious double standard, I am often told that when it comes to divorce and remarriage we must communicate grace above all else. To this I can only respond, "When will we start communicating the same grace to our gay brothers and sisters?"

Protecting marriage against divorce

Don't get me wrong: I am not advocate of gay marriage. All I am saying here is that evangelical churches will have no credibility if they go on condemning gay marriages without revisiting the question of what the Bible has to say about marriage itself, and divorce, and the nature of all sexual activity. Unless they are simply homophobic, these churches will soon discover that they cannot get tough with gay people and just let everybody else off the hook.

I am not in favor of The Defense of the Marriage Amendment, but if there must be one I think it should also deal with divorce, instead of just picking on gays. After all, it's high time we made getting out of a marriage more difficult than getting out of a traffic ticket.

Again, don't misunderstand me: Divorces must remain available to those who must escape destructive situations like spousal abuse. Nevertheless, both church and state have condoned easy divorces for too many people, and these divorces have left millions of children emotionally shattered for the rest of their lives. Am I suggesting that unhappy couples ought to remain together for the sake of their kids? Absolutely. As far as I am concerned, innocent boys and girls are the best reason to really defend marriage.

The time is past, if ever there was such a time, when you can just discover knowledge and turn it loose in the world and assume that you have done good.

This, to me, is a sign of the incompleteness of science in itself – which is a sign of the need for a strenuous conversation among all the branches of learning. This is a conversation that the universities have failed to produce, and in fact have obstructed.

Wendell Berry

Drive-by Educators

Another semester has ended, and it is time to grieve. It is time to mourn all those classes students enrolled in and paid good money to attend but for which they had no teachers. I'm not talking about the first-year classes of 3,000 students where the professor speaks from a pre-recorded lecture on a giant screen. I'm not thinking about the mixed blessing of distance education. I'm referring to something much more ordinary.

For most of us who have had the privilege of attending university, it is a truism that many who have achieved the highest accolades in their area of expertise are chronically unable to teach. In many cases, I would even say *unwilling* to teach. The sad reality of many undergraduate's education is that they sit for hours trying to learn from someone gifted with significant skill but who has no idea how to communicate that reserve of knowledge in an effective way.

"My professor mumbles, and I can only make out half of what he says," related one student last week. Some profs walk into class and just start working out problems on the board – no hello, no introduction to the day's topic. Some professors have not taken the time to learn the language well enough to engage a class of two hundred students for hours at a time. Others only know how to lecture in monologue. Dialogue, let alone group work or experiential learning techniques are foreign ideas to them. It's the "I said it, they learnt it" mentality.

Publish or perish

The problem is not just methodological: content is also an issue. "I took a sociology course," said one student, "where every class ended with a rant on 'heterosexuality.'" It was deemed the cause of every social problem in our culture." Another student related that her course on Shakespeare involved little more than uncovering sexual subtexts. "It wasn't just that he said it was his interpretation," explained the student. "It was *the* interpretation of all Shakespeare." This reductionism sounds like anything but sound pedagogy, let alone good scholarship.

The onus is not only on professors. Responsibility also lies in the system that spawned such a breed of educators. As it stands, there is little or no time dedicated in the education of a Ph.D. to pedagogy. There is the odd T.A. workshop on "Leading Effective Seminars," but they are strictly voluntary. If graduate students are not taught how to teach, the cycle simply continues.

Additionally, and more importantly, there is little

CAMPUS CULTURE

Peter Schuurman



incentive to teach well in the world of higher education. Tenure is based first and foremost on research – how many books you are publishing, how many grants you have for your experiments. "Publish or perish" aptly describes the pressure cooker of academic life. Teaching awards do exist, but they don't rate like a research prize. Teaching is a second-class vocation on most secular campuses.

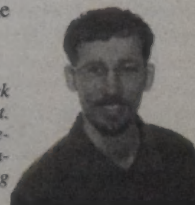
Teaching as research

It's ironic that respected professors can research everything with a sophisticated rigor except what they do daily in the classroom. Much of what they know about teaching comes from oral folklore passed around in a faculty lounge. Teaching needs to be seen as research, and the classroom as a lab. Students are not simply empty receptacles that need to be filled, but fellow learners who need to be engaged and coached. The classroom is not an interruption from research, but a place to test and pass on the best of our cultural resources.

I say this as someone who has taught at the university level (without tenure anxieties, I should add), and I know that especially when you have to teach new courses, the load can be heavy. To be fair, I should mention that not all professors are pedagogical delinquents. At Brock I have witnessed some highly creative teaching sessions. I do not expect all professors to become Socrates, let alone entertainers or counselors. Students need to take responsibility for their learning and challenge their profs to enthusiastic learning. But if we do not recognize the idols in our life, the consequences will be that our learning, our wonder, and our service to the kingdom will be severely impaired. The rewards and the system make a good teacher a counter-cultural phenomenon.

Ultimately, we need a holistic approach to education. You can find examples of this in many places, if you look hard enough. In my mind, Christian educational institutions are setting the standard here. In so far as they do not go cheap for academic prestige and enviable research grants, they are places where dedicated teachers can be found. The fact that they claim to follow a Jewish prophet who taught more than he published may make all the difference.

Peter Schuurman, chaplain at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont. has been appointed Christian Reformed Home Missions' new Educational Mission Leader beginning October 2004.



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Church

Eight pastors and over 1,500 killed in central Nigeria religious violence

Obed Minchakpu

KADUNA, Nigeria (Compass) – Muslim fanatics burned down 10 Christian churches in the town of Makarfi in the northern state of Kaduna, Nigeria, on Saturday. Claims that a Christian teenager with special needs desecrated the Quran apparently incited the attack.

An undisclosed number of Christians were reported killed in the incident, which also resulted in the displacement of hundreds of other Christians from the town. These have now taken refuge in the city of Kaduna.

Bodies of the dead Christians from Makarfi were brought to police stations in Kaduna City on Sunday, the day after the attack. This Compass correspondent visited the Kakuri and Sabo Tasha police stations and saw corpses piled in trucks to be taken away for mass burial by the police. Police prevented people there from getting close to the trucks bearing the dead bodies.

Leaders deliberately using fanatics

At a press conference in Kaduna on Monday, April 5, Dr. Sam Kujiyat, vice-chairman of the Kaduna state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), confirmed the killings in Makarfi and the destruction of the 10 churches.

"We are still receiving reports from affected churches on this incident and would inform you adequately on the issue once the security situation there improves," Kujiyat told journalists.

"Islamic terrorists hiding under the cover of religion have invaded the state and are now unleashing terror on Christians over stupid reasons," he said.

"The situation we are witnessing today is the emergence of a dangerous trend in which religious sentiment is being used as a cover to victimize Christians.

"Having observed closely the trend and the pattern of the attacks CAN has only one option and that is to alert the public, through the mass media, of the dangers and fears these incidents evoke in the minds and hearts of Christians in the state." During the press conference, CAN leaders demanded the arrests and prosecution of the Muslim fanatics that carried out the attacks on Christians. They also requested provision from the Kaduna state government to rebuild all the burned churches.

"It is our conclusion that Muslim leaders are deliberately using fanatics in the name of Islam to engage in periodic attacks on Christians with the sole aim to intimidate, terrorize and force Christians into submission and to denounce their faith," Kujiyat concluded.

Malam Yusuf Abuakar, a Muslim residing in Makarfi, witnessed the attack on Christians. Abuakar described the incident to Compass at police headquarters in Kaduna on Monday, April 5.

"A teenager, who is said to have special needs, went into an Islamic school, took a copy of the Quran from one of the students and tore it," Abuakar said. "This provoked the students and Muslims nearby, who then pounced on the teenager, beating him mercilessly." Abubakar explained that the teenager's mother came to his rescue and took him to a nearby police station. But the Muslims pursued the pair to the police station and set it ablaze.

The mob then proceeded to burn down the 10 churches.

Christian leaders pull out of talks

An umbrella group representing various Christian churches in Nigeria said on Friday, April 9 it had pulled out of peace talks with Muslims in the volatile northern Nigerian state of Kaduna after accusing Islamic militants of mounting a new spate of attacks on Christians across the north.

For three years, the CAN has been in government-backed talks with its Muslim counterpart, Jamatu'ul Nasir Islam (JNI) in Kaduna State in a bid to end the sectarian violence.

More than 3,000 people have died in clashes in the state capital of Kaduna, since 2000.

However, CAN leaders said on Friday that the process has been undermined by a series of attacks against Christians that have claimed more than 1,000 lives and razed 63 churches since the beginning of the year.

Muslim fanatics in Nigeria burn down 10 churches

Obed Minchakpu

JOS, Nigeria (Compass) – Religious violence that erupted in the central Nigerian state of Plateau a few weeks ago spilled into more towns and villages in that state and beyond, resulting in the deaths of eight pastors and 1,500 Christian believers, and the destruction of 173 churches.

The Plateau state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) released the names of seven of the martyred pastors, an eighth pastor, whose name was unavailable, was killed with his wife and four children.

The ministers served Baptist, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Assemblies of God and Evangelical Reformed congregations, as well as the Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) and the Evangelical Church of West Africa.

Rumors of Muslim mercenaries

COCIN spokesmen Dinfa Mamshal and Sunday Lakong said that Muslim extremists in the state have recruited over 10,000 Muslim mercenaries from the republics of Niger and Chad to invade Christian towns and villages. Fundamentalist Muslim bands have gone on a

rampage of killing and maiming Christians and burning down their churches, they said.

At a press conference in Jos on March 16, Christian community leader Ambrose Gapsuk said, "The invasion of Christian towns and villages by Muslim fanatics clearly demonstrates that the attack is a war against Christians." Gapsuk is from Shendam town in one of the areas affected by violence.

Gapsuk reported that 1,500 Christians were killed and their churches and properties were destroyed.

Thousands turned into refugees

Nigeria's National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) reported that religious violence in Plateau and Nasarawa has affected 10 local government areas in the two states, resulting in the displacement of 25,000 people.

Alhaji Musa Lima, special adviser to the governor of neighboring Bauchi state, told Compass, "About 50,000 displaced persons who managed to escape the hostility have temporarily relocated to some parts of this state." Bauchi officials report that the influx of refugees has placed enormous pressure on local resources.

NEMA spokesman Biodun Oladunjoye said that among the displaced people are many women and children whose numbers are daily decimated by diseases and hunger. He also said that unless something is done urgently, refugee camps in the three states will see more deaths.

Government slow to act

"Government is doing all it can to curtail the violence against Christians in the state," Plateau state governor Joshua Dariye said in an address during Sunday worship at the Church of Christ in Jos. "We sympathize with the church over the death of its pastors and church members and will do all we can to check the spread of the violence against Christians in this state."

Meanwhile, Nigeria's president, Olusegun Obasanjo, reacted to the continued violence by admitting that "the authorities in these states seem to be powerless or lack the inspiration to do something about it."

Muslim leaders reportedly visited Obasanjo in his office in Abuja, the nation's capital, on March 16 to discuss solutions to the conflict. "People will want to give excuses, but I don't think we have any excuse to allow violence to engulf us and our land," Obasanjo told them.

Refugee crisis forces Christians in Nigeria to celebrate Easter in open air

Obed Minchakpu

MAKURDI, Nigeria (ENI) – Christians in the capital of Benue state, Makurdi, in central Nigeria were forced to celebrate the Easter Holy Week in the midst of refugees who had occupied church buildings following ethnic violence that displaced over 30,000 people.

Many services were conducted in the open air because the church sanctuaries were filled to overflowing with the displaced people.

In many cases, the church services brought together Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, Evangelicals, and Pentecostals who would normally worship separately.

"For the first time, the warring factions in the ethnic crisis forgot their differences and prayed together in the Easter worship services that were held in all church denominations across Makurdi town," said a Catholic priest, the Rev. Celestine Ayongo.

The displaced people had taken refuge in the church buildings after fighting on March 21 led to the de-



struction of property and homes whose value was put at millions of dollars.

The violence erupted when members of the Tiv ethnic group attacked the homes of settlers they accused of stealing their land near the Agboghoh community on the outskirts of Makurdi, news agencies reported.

Johnson Uzoegbunam, the police commissioner of Benue state told Ecumenical News International on April 11 that 20 people had been

killed in the fighting. "We are still combing the areas where some people have been arrested with machetes, knives, and guns," he said.

The incident was the latest in central Nigeria where hundreds of people are reported to have been killed in communal and religious violence in recent months.

Many Christian leaders in Easter messages denounced the Nigerian government for its inability to check the spread of violence motivated by religious and other causes.

Church

Three Christians gunned down in Indonesia in separate incidents

INDONESIA (Barnabas Fund) — Three shootings in four days at the end of March left two Christians dead and one seriously injured in the Poso area of Central Sulawesi.

Pastor Freddy Wuisan, 25, was fatally shot in the chest in front of his wife, in Membuke about 30 miles west of Poso, by gunmen who knocked on the door to his house next to the Church. Six hours earlier on the same day (Tuesday, March 30), the Christian Dean of the School of Law at Sintuwu Moroso University, Poso, was seriously injured by shots to the head and right hand. Another victim, Rosia Pilongo, 41, is in critical condition at Poso General Hospital. In each case, witnesses near the shootings saw two people speeding away on a motorcycle.

The two attacks on March 30 followed another shooting three days earlier in which Christian Tanalida, 37, was killed near central Poso and the discovery of a

bomb outside a church some 60 miles northwest of Poso.

Ride by shootings

'Ride by shootings' and other attacks by motorcyclists are becoming a common feature of anti-Christian violence in Central Sulawesi, suggesting some kind of coordination in these attacks which occur over a widespread area. Most recently, on March 11, a woman in the village of Maranatha, 18 miles to the south of regional capital Palu, was hacked to death by motorcyclists wielding machetes. On January 24 motorcyclists attacked a village 20 miles to the west of Poso, injuring a policeman. On December 5 motorcyclists shot at six young Christians in Poso itself, injuring two. On November 29 Muslims pulled up on a motorbike outside a church 70 miles to the east of Poso and shot dead two worshippers. On October 1 a Christian convert from Islam was gunned down in

Pandiri (12 miles south of Poso), by two assassins on a motorbike.

Background and analysis

Between 1999 and 2001 all out fighting in the area around Poso claimed some 2000 lives. It ended with the Malino Peace Accord in December 2001, but sporadic violence has continued ever since. Analysts say that several of the recent attacks are being carried out by a particularly violent local Islamic group called Mujahideen Kompak.

They in turn are a subgroup of the militant Islamist group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) that operates in many countries of Southeast Asia with the aim of setting up an Islamic Super-State under the rule of shari'a (Islamic law). JI were responsible for the Bali bombings and for the church bombings on Christmas Eve 2000 which killed 18 Christians celebrating Christmas.

Gunmen strafe congregation during Easter service

An Easter church service at the Tabernacle Church in Kilo just outside Poso in central Sulawesi was disrupted by violence and death as two gunmen stormed into the church firing a hail of bullets into the congregation. Seven people were wounded, including a four-year-old girl. The attack happened two weeks after the spate of killings reported above.

Hospital staff said none of those wounded were in critical condition. The BBC speculated that the shooting was part of a campaign by a radical Islamist group Jemaah Islamiyah, also believed responsible for the other killings.]

Contacted by *The Jakarta Post*,

Poso Police chief Abdi Dharma Sitepu said, "After they heard the first gunshot they immediately fell to the ground and lay face down (covered by the pews), which is why there were no fatalities."

Witnesses saw three men wearing ninja-like costumes approach the church on motorcycle from the direction of Poso. Two of them got off the motorcycle, ran into the church and started shooting, making their escape shortly afterwards into a nearby forest area.

Although police forces in the area had been reinforced in preparation for Easter, the gunmen were not apprehended.

The BBC report described Poso

as an area plagued by "inter-religious violence," as if both parties are equally at fault. Almost all the attacks reported, however, are committed in Christian villages on Christians by unidentified attackers presumed to be Islamic radicals.

Christians in nearby Tentena, who have also suffered attacks in recent months, set up roadblocks to check every vehicle coming into their town. The police chief expressed relief that the Christians did not retaliate and spark more conflict.

[Based on stories from the BBC and the Jakarta Post.]

Nigerian authorities arrest sponsor of Muslim militants

Obed Minchakpu

KANO, Nigeria (Compass) — Government security agents in Nigeria have reported the arrest of a Sudanese Muslim businessman who heads a Saudi Arabia-funded charity in connection with financing bloody Islamic attacks on Christians. Sheik Muhideen Abdullahi, director of Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust, was arrested on February 20 in the northern city

of Kano following "the discovery of financial transactions running into millions of dollars between him and an Islamic fundamentalist cleric, Alhaji Sharu, in Kano," an official of the State Security Service said. Trust funds have reportedly gone to propagate the Wahhabi sect of Islam in Nigeria and to finance a fundamentalist Muslim uprising in December 2003 which left two policemen and

a dozen militants dead and thousands of Christians displaced. When authorities released Abdullahi 10 days after his arrest, more than 5,000 Sufi Muslims protested, calling for the immediate closure of Al-Muntada Al-Islami Trust offices and demanding that the Wahhabi sect be banned from the country.

Women can't be pastors or go down coal mines, says Polish Lutheran

Jonathan Luxmoore

Warsaw (ENI) — A prominent Polish Protestant leader has voiced "deep concern" about a statement by the country's Lutheran church rejecting women pastors and instructing clergy not to share services with them.

"I'm astonished, since I believed our churches had an understanding," said Bishop Zdzislaw Tranda, retired head of the 4000-member Reformed Evangelical Church in Poland, noting that the statement appeared to contradict existing accords between Poland's Lutheran, Reformed and Methodist churches in which they recognized each other's decisions on women pastors.

"We don't want to go the way of the West"

The Reformed bishop's comments came in response to a statement from the bishops' conference of the (Lutheran) Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland which was dated December 11 but published only in March by the church's *Zwiastun* bi-weekly newspaper.

However, the president of the Lutheran church synod, Bishop Tadeusz Szurman, told ENI that the statement was not a new decision but only a clarification of his church's "binding regulations."

"Women's ordination isn't a problem here," Szurman stated. "Our places of worship are full, our parishes expanding, and we face many other important issues. We don't want to go the way of the West, which leads to having more mosques than churches." The matter was "only an issue for a few women who'd like to be ordained," Szurman stated.

"Our church is too small, and our priests too busy, to introduce this change," the Lutheran bishop noted. "Women can't do this work, just as they can't go down our coal mines."

In its statement, the Lutheran bishops' conference said the Lutheran church in Poland allowed the ordination of women as deacons, but only admitted men to its priesthood, and said Lutheran clergy should abide by the same rules in services with other denominations.

The editor of Poland's Ecumenical News Agency, Kazimierz Bem, predicted the statement would raise "poignant questions" for the Lutheran church's ecumenical partners in Poland and abroad because of its apparent implication that women ministers might be barred from attending Lutheran ordinations in Poland.

"It states for the first time explicitly that the Polish Lutheran church doesn't ordain women, and does not plan to do so," Bem said. "It undermines the ecumenical unity established between Lutherans and Reformed."

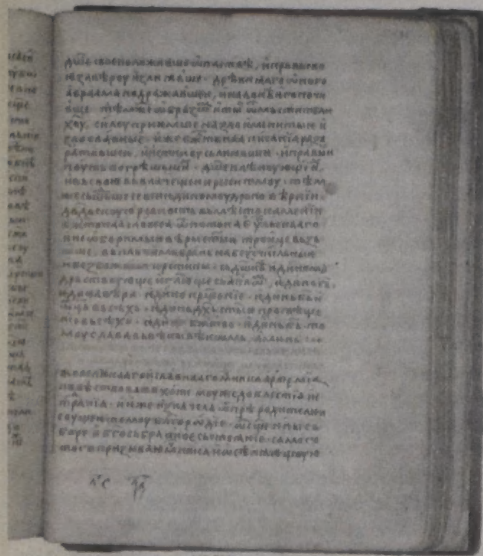
Poland's 90,000-strong Lutheran church is the country's biggest Protestant denomination, and its governing synod voted in 1990 against allowing women as pastors. In September 2003, the Evangelical Reformed church became the country's first denomination to appoint a female pastor, Wiera Jelinek.



Jan Huss memorial in Prague, Poland

Religion

Ten points to ponder from the Apocrypha

MS 706
St. John of Damascus, Serbia, early 15th c.

Dr. Jim Payton

I'd like to invite you to reflect on some statements from the Apocrypha.

"You're recommending we read the Apocrypha?" Yes – and so did the Reformers.

"But isn't the Apocrypha a bunch of Roman Catholic books?" No, it's a bunch of Jewish books (which are in the Roman Catholic Bible and the Orthodox Bibles).

"But they're not in our Bibles!" No, they're not – but they used to be. Even though the Reformers didn't accept the Apocrypha as part of the inspired canon of Scripture, they taught that the books of the Apocrypha were beneficial, as pious reading. The Reformers said that we shouldn't rely on the Apocrypha to establish doctrine (since they did not view the Apocrypha as canonical), but they declared that the Apocrypha offered much valuable instruction in piety and godliness – and invited Christians to read the Apocrypha.

Throughout the whole Reformation period, Protestant versions of the Bible included the Apocrypha in a collection which was placed between the Old and New Testaments – Luther set up that pattern, Protestants of all types followed it, and the Synod of Dort endorsed it. That was the common practice among Reformation-era Protestants, until one Protestant version of the Bible accidentally left out the Apocrypha section. When those Bibles still sold well, printers found a way to save some money in printing and binding costs. Eventually, the practice of publishing the Bible

without the Apocrypha became the Protestant pattern – but as a business decision, not a doctrinal one!

But the Protestant Reformers urged the value of the Apocrypha for Christians: they said that it would offer us much pious, godly reading.

So, they're good to read. What are they about?

The books of the Apocrypha were all written during the intertestamental period. They were written by Jewish authors who wanted to get their own people thinking about their history, what it had shown them about relating before God, and how to live more faithfully before him. That is, they reflected on the history of redemption, their own failures, and the faithfulness of God – which is what God's people in any generation should be reflecting on. No wonder the Reformers thought we could benefit from reading the Apocrypha.

I myself have read through the Apocrypha several times. Each time, I found it stimulating and thought-provoking. I also found many verses or sections which offered profound insight into life before God or searching reflections on his ways with us. Below, I offer ten of these, with a few comments, to help you see what the section is getting at – and how it speaks to us. I am not claiming these are "the best possible" collection of ten such sections, but these are ten that have regularly caused me to reflect.

(1) "What you hate, do not do to anyone" (Tobit 4:15).

This is the camera negative of the "Golden Rule" (Matt. 7:12). So what if Jesus wasn't the first to teach this? Does that make it any less true? Either way, in the positive or the negative, this is how you and I are supposed to live.

(2) "In spite of everything let us give thanks to the Lord our God" (Judith 8:25).

When things go tough for God's people, faith still whispers that God is in control. In that gut-wrenching situation, the apostle says, "In everything give thanks" (1 Thess. 5:18). But when it hurts so bad and nothing makes any sense, that's a tall order. Judith is more within our reach – at least, she offers us a place to start.

(3) "We journeyed through trackless deserts, but the way of the Lord we have not known" (Wisdom of Solomon 5:7).

Forty years in the wilderness, after not heeding the two spies – the first stanza of Israel's theme song. The whole long pattern of Israel going its own way, rather than walking in God's. But how much different has it been for the church, in the two millennia since the One who is "the Way" walked among us? Don't we need to sing this lament, too?

(4) "Blessed is the wood by which righteousness comes" (Wisdom of Solomon 14:7).

The writer was referring to the ark built by Noah, in which he and his family – the total number of the "righteous" then – were saved from the flood. In this season of Lent, we thank God for some other wood by which righteousness comes – in the shape of a cross.

(5) "The ungodly custom, grown strong with time, was kept as a law" (Wisdom of Solomon 14:16).

Referring to the idolatry practiced by the nations, the author also had in mind the ways in which Israel, too, had "gotten used to" what began as wrong but, with time, was embraced as right – and demanded, as surely as if God himself had required it. How often have churches and Christians done that – not just in the distant past, but even today? Has it happened with you?

(6) "For even if we sin we are yours, knowing your power; but we will not sin, because we know that you acknowledge us as yours" (Wisdom of Solomon 15:2).

Reflecting on the waywardness of his own people through the centuries, the author nonetheless recognizes that God's mercy has always been greater: God doesn't forsake the work of his hands (Ps. 138:8). Gratitude leads to devotion and commitment – isn't that the pattern of the life of the faithful in

"The prayer that never fails."

Morris Greidanus

Some years ago, while recovering from surgery, I read the four or five of Jan Karon's Mitford novels that were then available. The novels deal with the ups and downs in the life of an aging clergyman, Tim, and the community (Mitford) in which he lives. They are light reading, but sprightly and warmly faithful. Cynthia, the attractive, spunky widow who moves in next door to the clergyman, adds romantic interest and no small encouragement to his faith in times of crisis. Somewhere in a crisis, in the third book I think, one phones the other, explains a

bit of the problem, and ends by asking, "Quick, pray the prayer that never fails."

Although I was not engaged in theological research at the time (see line 1), I did page back to see if there was an earlier reference to this prayer that never fails. No, there was no earlier mention of it (the phrase was used more later), so I began to wonder what this magic prayer could be?

Did Ms Karon mean something like the prayer of Jabez?

Did she have some special trick formula in mind that would oblige God to come through?



Chinese Christians praying

every generation, and today, too?

(7) "Do not let your hand be stretched out to receive but closed when it is time to give" (Sirach 4:31).

Receiving freely leads to giving gladly – at least, that's the way it's supposed to work. The reason that pipe gets plugged up is the sludge in our hearts.

(8) "How can dust and ashes be proud? Even in life the human body decays" (Sirach 10:9).

Clearly, the author was middle-aged or older. In youth, we think we're indestructible, but after a few years, we discover the warranty on a lot of our parts has run out. We can't even control our own bodies: we all fall apart eventually – so why are we so proud?

(9) "You cannot understand the things with which you have grown up; how then can your mind comprehend the way of the Most High?"

And how can one already worn out by the corrupt world understand incorruption?" (2 Esdras 4:10-11).

Mark Twain's sardonic observation is comment enough: "We have infinite trouble in solving man-made mysteries; it is only when we set out to discover the secrets of God that our difficulties disappear."

(10) "O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the fall was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants" (2 Esdras 7:118).

In the intertestamental period, thoughtful Jews drew the connections between Adam's sin and our human situation. The Apostle Paul carried this further in Romans 5 and I Corinthians 15. Which hits you more, the theological description of Paul, or the existential question of Esdras? Either way, the result is the same – and we need the deliverer promised in the garden.

Caregiving

Is that all?

"What set of words would form a prayer that God always answers?" I have asked this question of a congregation during a sermon. We always have to think a while, and then the puzzled look disappears and the answer comes into view.

That's how it went for me too. I thought a while, and then I figured: This has to be in the area of "Your will be done."

If you thought along with me this far, is that where you landed too?

Were you disappointed that that's all there is?

I think we have the right answer (and Jan Karon shows her solid theology by describing it the same way later), but is that really so disappointing?

Versions of God's will

We have several ideas about God's will from our theology and especially from our study of the Lord's Prayer in the Catechism and the many sermons we may hear or made on it.

The Catechism (in Lord's Day 49) talks about God's will as something for us to do and to obey. It says "Help us and all people to reject our own wills and to obey your will without any back talk." With that view the prayer-that-never-fails would depend on our obedience, and we know how shaky that is.

Another understanding of "will" that fits well with our predestination theology is God's plan, design, decree: what he intends to do. That fits fine with the prayer-that-never-fails, but then it probably sounds too passive and fatalistic to us. God will do what he plans to do; what's the good news and comfort in a prayer like this? Why would anyone who is not a Muslim quickly ask someone to pray this?

Beyond submission

It depends on your view of God and his will. Is God's will that bad? Would it be worse than ours? Would our view of what needs to happen right now be something better that just had not occurred to God?

The prayer-that-never-fails is much like those powerfully submissive words our Lord prayed in the garden: "Yet not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus does not pray that prayer fatalistically, but obediently, and in full trust that God's will is the best thing that can happen.

The Catechism gives a hint that we are beyond resigning to something we dread, like going to a Holocaust museum. For it also mentions the Gethsemane conflict of wills and moves it from our Lord to us: "...reject our own wills and to obey your will...." Then it offers as a reason for praying and doing God's will: "Your will alone is good."

There's a saving thought! God's will is good. It's better than what we may plead or hope. In fact, it is as Paul reminds us

Palliative care: it's all about living

I watched the young auburn-haired woman walk into the auditorium, and wondered when she'd last had a good night's sleep. She took her place among the other speakers, her expression distinct from the calm, professional types surrounding her. Beyond the dark circles under her eyes, a subtle air of sadness veiled her face. The reason for her weary countenance emerged as her story unfolded.

Lise Ferguson was one of several speakers at a day long workshop entitled, *The Palliative Child*, hosted last fall by Hospice Wellington in Guelph, Ontario. An audience of social workers, hospice volunteers, nurses and caregivers listened intently to a team of palliative care experts from Sick Children's Hospital in Toronto. The panel gave helpful advice on how to support children in the last days of their lives.

We heard from a woman with a master's degree in education, who literally spends her time "clowning" around with hospitalized children, a music therapist, a hospice volunteer, a social worker and a palliative care physician. Each one contributed from his or her experience in working with children suffering from terminal illness and their families. But Lise Ferguson shared directly from her painful perspective as the mother of two children who died in infancy.

Life in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Lise and her husband, John, had tried for several years to conceive, only to have every pregnancy end in miscarriage within the first six weeks. They were elated when the doctor finally informed them that Lise was carrying twins. Complications forced her into strict bed rest before the end of the first trimester, but the hopeful mom was "cautiously optimistic" that her children would be born healthy and strong. Doctors carefully monitored her gestation. Lise did everything within her power to ensure a good start for her children. Telling the story, her gentle features brightened as she spoke of watching the ultrasound images of her children during weekly hospital visits.

Twenty-six weeks into the pregnancy Lise experienced severe problems. Doctors decided on an emergency Caesarian. Baby Suzanne entered the world at a feisty 1 lb., 2 oz. Her big sister, Catherine, weighed in at a strapping 3 lbs. Both babies were immediately rushed to the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Lise and John continued their emotional rollercoaster ride within the strange and intimidating world of the NICU. Here babies suffering all sorts of maladies were hooked up to myriad machines and complicated technology, while gown-clad personnel spoke a foreign language of ominous medical terms.

Lise spent 12 hours a day, seven days a week with her daughters in the NICU. John arrived at the hospital each evening after work. Nurses and volunteers alike assisted the first time parents to enjoy a short, but loving relationship with their babies. Although Suzanne was particularly small, she demonstrated a "fighter's spirit," and the Fergusons hoped that she might one day lead a normal life. Catherine required a simple, but critical operation. Doctors felt she could survive.

Volunteers arranged for Lise to take her daughters for a stroller ride around the NICU. They took pictures of the girls and their parents together, supplied Lise with an anecdotal journal of the babies' progress, and made a plaque bearing the impression of each precious girl's handprint.

"...his good, pleasing, and perfect will" (Romans 12:2).

A good place to be

So what were we thinking when we thought that we knew better than God what should happen? God is our Father who created us and this world. He loves us and the

whole world so much that he comes in Jesus and the Spirit to save and encourage us. Of course, his ways are far beyond us; he is God, we are only human. We can have our hopes and plans. We can certainly pray and plead, but Jan Karon is right: the best that can happen is that God's will is done. And God's will shall happen, and that will

Intangible Things

Heidi VanDerSlikke

Cherishing every day

One night, when she was two weeks old, Suzanne Ferguson, nestled into her mother's arms and suddenly stopped breathing. NICU staff couldn't revive the tiny child. Lise made a conscious decision to delay grieving the death of her daughter, instead focusing all her energy and emotions on her surviving child.

Catherine's surgery went well and she recovered quickly. Lise and John maintained their NICU vigil, cherishing each day with their little girl. Volunteers continued to support them. On one occasion Lise was allowed to "kangaroo" her baby. Catherine was unhooked from her feeding tube and monitor, and completely undressed. Then she was laid against her mother's chest, skin to skin, under a warm blanket. As Lise cuddled her child she knew that she might never teach her to print her name, help her pick out a prom dress, or watch her graduate from college. But she savored the moment, feeling Catherine's heart beat next to hers, nuzzling the silky warmth of her downy soft hair.

With every passing month, John and Lise held fast to hope for the future, at the same time painfully aware that each day might be Catherine's last. Then, on a Sunday evening, at the age of six months, Catherine began to quiver violently, just as Lise tucked her in for the night. The alarm sounded. Nurses responded immediately. But Catherine died within ten minutes.

A brief but full life

Lise's message was clear. The fact that her daughters' lives were brief in no way diminished their significance as people. They had lived their days fully, largely due to the effort of dedicated medical personnel and volunteers. In the process, these two little girls brought great joy to those who loved and cared for them. With remarkable composure, Lise asserted, "It makes no difference whether a person lives two weeks, six months, or fifty years — what matters is the quality of that life."

When most people hear the term palliative care, they think about death and dying. It's true that those who are palliative don't focus on seeking a cure, or becoming well. But the emphasis is on life. People involved in end of life care are people working to make life worth living, whether it lasts for days, months or years.

I took training to become a hospice worker last spring, and offered to work with children who were grieving, or terminally ill, or living in a home where someone is palliative. A few days ago I received my first case from the hospice coordinator. Next week I'll begin work with an 8-year-old boy who has seen more tragedy than most of the adults I know. I can only hope that God will use me to help this little guy discover the beauty of life all around him as he deals with his grief.

These days Lise Ferguson sublimates her grief into service as she volunteers in the NICU, helping other parents who face challenges similar to her own. The sadness she bears translates into kindness and compassion toward others. The world remains a lovelier place because Suzanne and Catherine Ferguson once lived here.

Heidi VanderSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont. Her email: hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com



be good.

So there is a prayer that never fails, that's always answered: "Your will be done." It's not a trick. It's not fatalism. It is the faithful realization that our lives in the hands of our God, and that his hands are a very good, safe place.

Roots

My mother's churches

Cathy Smith

After years of wishful thinking and dreaming, I finally had the opportunity to do it. On June 29, 2001, I boarded a Martinair jet and was on my way to explore my familial roots in The Netherlands accompanied by a fully qualified expert – my mom. Our destination was Groningen, the province my parents left behind when they emigrated to Canada in 1954.

High on my list of “to do’s” was to see as many churches as possible. I had always been intrigued by the photographs of stately churches in my parents’ Dutch books. I wanted to experience the immensity of those buildings, to drink in the centuries of devotion they represented. I wanted to stand where massive towers and enduring brick walls still assert boldly that God is holy and mighty, and that he is from everlasting to everlasting.

Awed by the vastness of the Martinikerk

My relatives were gracious with their time and transportation, and I was able to visit many historic churches. Especially impressive was St. James Church in Zeerijp, circa 1300, called a John-the-Baptist church because the bell tower (head) is detached from the main building (trunk). Colorful Moresque decorations adorn two of the entrances, an exotic reminder of Spanish influence on this Benedictine structure. The majestic organ and elaborately carved pulpit, both installed in the 1600’s, preside with regal solemnity over the sanctuary. Rectangular patches of darker gray on the stone floor mark the imbedded tombstones of



St. James Church in Zeerijp

the aristocracy. Centuries later the faded inscriptions naming the loss of a beloved daughter or an honored mother remain poignant.

In the capital city, also named Groningen, I was awed by the vastness of the Martinikerk (St. Martin’s Church), whose foundations date back to 1000 A.D. My visit was unexpectedly enriched by someone practicing Bach on the splendid baroque organ for a concert to be held later that evening. The Aa-Kerk is another stunning medieval edifice in Groningen, dating from the 1200’s. Lofty vaulted ceilings, painted midnight blue and dotted with yellow stars, held me spellbound, craning my neck till it hurt. In the nave I was touched to find a simply framed poem commemorating the Canadian soldiers who had liberated Groningen.

Tucked away behind walls and doors in the center of the city, is St. Geertruid’s, a private

church for an exclusive community called Pepergasthuis. Originally built as lodgings for pilgrims, Pepergasthuis was eventually converted into supported living accommodations for seniors. It was here, with the permission of our elderly host, who volunteered his services as a guide, that I worked up the nerve to climb the high and imposing pulpit, the “preekstoel.”

The august presence of St. Joseph’s, a 19th century neo-gothic Roman Catholic cathedral, is heralded by a slender tower, 76 meters high, topped with a delicate iron spire, considered an audacious innovation at the time. Monumental stone pillars and beams dominate the interior, carved with the words of the Apostles Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Beatitudes in Latin and in Dutch. I gaped like a child at the soaring stained glass windows spilling rainbow light with luxurious beneficence.

A plain church for plain people

Here’s the funny thing, though. When I returned to Canada, it was my mother’s churches that lin-

gered in my thoughts. We visited the church in Ten Post where my mom was baptized, an 1870 Gereformeerde Kerk with a bald-faced exterior. A plain church for a plain people. Both of my mother’s grandmothers, Jaïke and Tryntje, lived across the street from this church, a fitting physical manifestation of the stronger spiritual umbilical cord. Mom recalled with a smile Grootmoe Jaïke’s habitual pose in church, her head nodding rhythmically in agreement with the Dominee. In addition to King peppermints, Grootmoe Jaïke had her snuff box to re-energize her concentration throughout the sermon. It was Grootmoe Jaïke’s job to prepare the “stoofs” for winter services. These wooden boxes, brass handles polished on Fridays, contained a still-smoldering lump of coal in a dish. Heat would emanate through holes punched in the lid. Families of the congregation would stop by on Sunday and pick up their “stoof” to help keep their feet warm in church.

Cranky Grootmoe Tryntje and the devil

These great-grandmothers of mine gaze sternly from yellowed

photographs. Grootmoe Jaïke once severely reprimanded my mother for being too cheerful: “Girls who whistle flirt with the devil!” Grootmoe Tryntje, with a wild crop of coarse white hair, was even crankier. A widow with two children, she possessed a flinty faith forged by a hard life. In Grootmoe Tryntje’s kitchen, if you were too generous with the butter and cheese on your bun, she would grimly remind you of that old proverb: “Zuivel op zuivel haalt je de duivel,” which, roughly translated, means, “Doubling up on the good stuff calls the devil to lunch.” Spiritually, she was always battle-ready, equipped with a superior knowledge of the enemy, and armed with a rhyming caveat for any situation. You must marry within your own denomination, she warned her children, because “Twee geloven op een kussen – daar slaapt de duivel tussen” [“Two different kinds of believers sharing one pillow invite the devil to sleep between them”].

Grootmoe Tryntje’s part-time income as the “koster,” or church custodian, was crucial for her survival. When the consistory politely informed her, as she was serving them tea, that they were going to



Original Gereformeerde Kerk in Ten Post (later Vrijmacht)



St. Joseph's in Groningen

Roots



Martinikerk gateway

replace her with a man who would be able to work full-time, she hurled a teacup against the wall. My Uncle Albert still has that broken teacup displayed in his china cabinet. We joked that, perhaps, like Luther and his inkwell, Grootmoe Tryntje sensed the presence of the devil in that room! She never mellowed. In her final year, ill and confined to an upstairs bedroom in her son's home, her bellicose cane would pound unrelentingly on the floor when she thought it was time for company

to leave, or for the grandchildren below to quiet down.

Gereformeerde and Vrijgemaakte

1944 was the year of the Vrijmaking, an event that robbed Ten Post of its cozy intimacy. Not one villager would remain unaffected by this church schism. After more than half a century, I could still detect the hurt in my mother's voice as she pointed out the farm of a wealthy man who would no longer employ her Gereformeerde

father after the split. For a brief period, Mom's family, and others who would not assimilate with the Vrijgemaakt majority of their divided fellowship, trekked to a nearby barn for worship. She pointed out the exact spot where the barn, now demolished, used to stand, just a short walk from her home. When her father's name was announced from the pulpit as a nominee for the office of elder, my teenage mom had erupted with a derisive snort. How could her father be an elder? He wasn't an affluent and established farmer, just an ordinary carpenter. But, wrenched from the old, this was the raw, convulsive birth of something new.

My mother's next house of worship was a long, low building, erected near the end of the war, constructed from precious scavenged planks. She made profession of faith in that ugly structure, little more than a shed, and later, she and my father were married there. Today that church has also disappeared, its lumber carted off for some other utilitarian purpose. Thrifty people, my ancestors.

The power of the mother-tongue

Eventually the Gereformeerde congregation in Ten Post prospered enough to acquire a tidy red brick church. Although I couldn't understand the sermon on the Sunday I attended, the cadences of the Lord's Prayer and the Law were familiar, even in Dutch. I was curious about the use of Dutch, though. I could understand my parents' dialect, Grunnings, fairly well, and had assumed that it would be used in the service. My aunt and my mother chuckled at my naivete and explained that, traditionally, their dialect had never been used for prayer, for church, or for school. Such a thing bordered on blasphemy! It was disrespectful to address a pastor or a teacher, or even their wives for that matter, in Grunnings!

By providential coincidence, as we were having this discussion, my aunt glanced in a newspaper and noticed that a special worship service, to be conducted in Grunnings, was scheduled that very evening in nearby Westeremden. So off we went to our second service — this time held in a white canvas tent, complete with brass band, a prayer by renowned Dutch painter Henk Helmantel, and a sermon about the Good Samaritan I could comprehend. My mom's eyes brimmed



On the pulpit at St. Geertruid's in Pepergasthuis

with tears as she sang hymns in her own language for the first time in 68 years, and I recalled the striking truth of a quote I once jotted down by the poet Czeslaw Milosz: "Language is the only homeland."

Memories in stone and brick

Too soon, our trip was over. We

came home just in time for the golden anniversary of our own local Christian Reformed Church in Wyoming, Ontario. With a hoarse voice and frequent pauses, a senior member led us in a prayer of thanksgiving for fifty years of congregational life. I found myself sharing his emotion. Fifty years ago it had taken courage and trust, and a dash of youthful recklessness, to scrape



Martinikerk in Groningen



Martinikerk choir

Christian Living



Inside Martinikerk

a new living out of Canadian soil and transplant a Dutch red-brick faith into a white clapboard church with a black shingled roof.

A stone's throw from Ten Post is a place called Wittewierum, or White Knoll. More of a crossroads, really. If you blink, you miss it. Mom and I had spent an afternoon there, gingerly picking our way through a weedy graveyard, peering through the broken panes of a dilapidated brick church, originally Roman Catholic, later Reformed. The oldest grave was dated 1669; the most recent, 1919. A prominent sign indicated that this had been the site of a monastery in the 1200's, quite possibly the very first Christian institution to be established in the area. White-robed novitiates had given the place its name as they served the Lord and their neighbors.

It dawned on me that this monastery, set on a small rise of land, was one of Mom's churches, too, even though she had been unaware of its existence as a child. What hopes had impelled these young monks to settle in the poor and backward northern reaches of Holland? Had they gladly accepted the call, or had they been enrolled by parents who could no longer afford to keep them? Had these teenagers,

garbed in white, ever stopped to assess what their impact would be on this tiny corner of the world?

I wanted to travel back in time. I wanted to speak a word of cheer to that weary novice, who rose at early dawn for morning prayers and carted home a bundle of sticks for the fire at dusk, and trace for him, and maybe for myself, too, the filaments of faith which, woven in an exquisite web, linked his abandoned, mosquito-infested missionary outpost to my home church in Wyoming, Canada.

Yes, I was humbled by the enormity of the cathedrals I saw, each one an astounding architectural act of praise. But I was humbled, too, by my mother's churches. The God who is mighty and holy, who is Alpha and Omega, can be found in barns, in sheds, and in tents, bending down tenderly, as Hosea says, to feed his people. His lullabies can be heard in Latin, in Dutch, in Grunnings, and in English. He sits at the bedside of wounded souls in fractured families and in splintered communities. When I ponder the intricate pattern of people and churches knit together by God, stitch by stitch, year after year, century after century, to generate just one individual's faith, my own, and,

A better world?

"In the lost boyhood of Judas, Christ was betrayed."
Irish Poet AE (1867-1935)

"The melody of the song suddenly jolted my senses."

"Then the sound of a harmonica...." "The beat of the drums...." "The flashing stage lights...." "By the second verse I did not know what to do...." "Fear gripped my throat...." "I could hardly breathe...."

Eliza stopped to take a deep breath. Tears slid down her cheeks. She squeezed her eyes shut as if she was trying to stem the tide of more memories. Her face was pale and her hair lay limp on her forehead.

Last week she was happy because she made progress in therapy. She was beginning to feel more safe and secure in her surroundings. She had not been out for fun in four months and thought it was time to test the waters. She was looking forward to a "foot stomping country concert." And now this! A seemingly innocent song that may or may not have been part of the backdrop of her violent date-rape experience, sent her spiraling into the abyss of terror and despair.

Eliza is disappointed by her setback. She knows she is battling symptoms of post traumatic stress. The violent assault on her body has shattered her world view and has left her struggling to make sense out of her life as well as her trust in God.

No malignity is motiveless

In the March 29, 2004 issue our editor Harry der Nederlanden commented on how we tend to use the word "evil" when we are not able to make sense out of incomprehensible cruel human interactions. He also used the term motiveless malignity regarding the "why" and "how come" of these dynamics that fall outside the range of normal human behavior. And while I agree with him that we may not be able to grasp various aspects of incomprehensible behavior I believe there are always reasons why people resort to violence, even if they are not aware of it themselves.

On April 7th, 2004, in a walk around Parliament Hill in Ottawa I witnessed the commemoration of the genocide in Rwanda of ten years ago. The president of the Humura Association, M. Oscar Gasana spoke about the dynamics of genocide. He said the signs and warnings were there for decades before the atrocities actually happened. But no one came to help. At the end of his talk he simply asked "whether children today are born into a better world?" The question hit home since I was in Ottawa awaiting the birth of a grandchild.

Churches promote violence

We often believe Canada is a safe place to live. Yet the world is becoming a global village. How many Canadian peace keepers, aid workers and

if I multiply that by Christians in all times and in all places, I get a joyfully dizzying sense of the infinitude of his grace and the patience of his salvation plan. I want to shout with Isaiah, "For Zion's sake, I will not keep silent, for

Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch." With the prophet's eyes, I begin to recognize each of my mother's churches as "a crown of splendor in the Lord's

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

missionaries have lost their lives on foreign soil. Still, the perpetuation of violence can take place right under our nose.

William Morrow, a Queens University religion professor believes all the criticism directed toward Mel Gibson in terms of his film *The Passion of the Christ* should be directed to the church. Morrow believes Gibson stands "in a well-worn road, giving faithful interpretation in a long-standing tradition in Christianity."

W. Morrow is an expert in biblical literature and specializes in the study of violence and religion. He believes the brutality on display in Gibson's film reflects the deep-seated "tension and paradox" surrounding the horror of the crucifixion on the one hand while underlining the enormity of the sacrifice made to pay for humanity's sins on the other. He would like to encourage "an interpretation of the cross from another perspective which is 100 per cent against violence. He does not think we will get that if we keep on concentrating on Jesus as a 'suffering servant' in the conventional sacrificial interpretation of the crucifixion."

Distinctive risks

Morrow, whose work and opinions were recently covered in the *Ottawa Citizen*, is in the process of writing a forthcoming book *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures* in which he uses our modern understanding of post traumatic stress disorder to gauge the psychological effects of certain biblical episodes. He says "the emphasis on Christ's agonizing death in Gibson's movie appeals to an age-old Christian impulse...." He also believes there are distinct risks when the violence of Jesus death is emphasized, as it is in the film and "it is naive to think that a focus on the brutality of the crucifixion will have no negative effects on a culture...."

A church in Ontario purchased at least 5,000 tickets to *The Passion of the Christ* and offered them free to the public. I can only wonder how many Eliza's there were among those who attended. Blanket support for this type of film shows how naive the church still is in regards to understanding the complexities of emotional and spiritual distress and development. And so, I am reminded of Jesus' words on the cross "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

And as for our new grandchild born a day after Easter Sunday we fervently hope and pray that this is indeed a better world!

Arlene Van Hove is a psychotherapist with Cascade Christian Counselling Association in Surrey, B.C.



hand, a royal diadem in the hand of God." I'll cherish the memories of those churches in my past, and share them, like sacramental bread, with my children.

Environment

Creation as fellow creature: Christian musings on responsibility

Peter Schuurman

While not an expert in this "field" of study, I do consider myself to be on a journey towards deeper eco-wisdom. I expect to finish hiking the 700 km of the Bruce Trail this year, and this project has prompted me to investigate some of the language I can find for eco-wisdom from my own ancient tradition. Four words I have found, and four words I offer you: lament, confession, partnership, and wonder.

There are numerous complaints to choose from when it comes to talking about religion, and while I have a few of my own I could share. I want to begin by naming one of the perks of Christianity: faith in a personal God provides you with one further place to complain. In fact, since God assumes an ultimate position in the multi-colored dynamics of the universe or universes, you know your concerns are going as far as they can go when they are lifted to this God in prayer.

In the Bible this genre of literature is referred to as lament. One example is Psalm 74 where the poet, looking at the devastation of his home land, cries to God: "They burned your sanctuary to the ground... they burned every place where God was worshiped in the land. We are given no miraculous signs, no prophets are left, and none of us knows how long this will be..." Or consider Jeremiah 12:4 where the prophet cries: "Animals and birds are dying because of the wickedness of our people, people who say, 'God doesn't see what we are doing.'"

Any good discussion of faith and ecology might well begin here: lament. Where the victims of ecological neglect and vandalism raise their voices in empathetic song with fellow creatures and question, pry, goad, and mope before the Cre-



ator and Sustainer of all things.

Confession is good for the soil

Complaint is only the beginning, however – the privilege of the marginalized and victimized. Confession may be another religious option for our beginning. They say confession is good for the soul because it assumes our responsibility and dignity while admitting our guilt and complicity. There is a standard, a rule, an obligation and even delight that stretches beyond us and calls us to account. It pokes and irritates our conscience if we have not seared it completely flat with instrumental imperatives, unwavering self-justifications, or blame-gaming with our rivals.

Christian poet farmer Wendell Berry put it this way: "Our destruction of nature is not just bad stewardship, or stupid economics, or a betrayal of family responsibility: it is the most horrid blasphemy." There is no louder way to say it: whether it's the poisoning of the Great Lakes or putting large holes in the sky, this is the greatest slur against the Creator, and people of faith should be the first to name it as such. The earth is our fellow creature, Sister Earth, and we have sinned against both God and her.

I was saddened to read this study by S.R. Kellert and J.K. Berry, *Phase III: Knowledge, Affection, and Basic Attitudes Toward Animals in American Society*, 1980: the more frequently

people attend a religious service in the United States, the less they know about environmental issues and the more utilitarian their views towards animals. I don't know if Canadians are different, but something is definitely wrong here. I would propose, too, that in the twenty years since this study, the church has changed considerably.

Creation as symphony

I do not believe our previous ignorance was nurtured by the Judeo-Christian scriptures. Genesis 1 is a creation symphony which God conducts, calling a trumpet sun to be and govern the day, calling the piccolo fish to be and fill the sea, calling the first violin of humanity to be and to govern the earth. God creates humanity from the humus on the same day he makes the animals. He breathes into them his Trinitarian image – that of a spirit fundamentally destined for three relationships: with God, other persons, and the rest of the creation. Genesis 2:15 says God placed them in the garden "to serve and care" for the land. He is to be the servant, caretaker, custodian, partner of Sister Earth, a model for life pictured most perfectly in Jesus Christ, who gives up his life for the renewal of the earth.

I am purposely avoiding

the term "steward" here not because I disagree with the term – it is one bona fide Biblical approach – but because the term can be confused with anthropocentric understandings, productivity-maximizing or managerial ethics, and fundraising campaigns in churches. Stewards are not necessarily benevolent care-takers, speaking both historically and Biblically. So I focus on partnership with God and earth, in the many ways it is demonstrated in the Bible. (See the work of H. Paul Santmire for a deeper discussion of partnership and stewardship).

The Christian worldview comes with a sharp critique of domination and exploitation, declaring that this world is God's creation symphony. He made it. He loves it. He orchestrates it. He calls humanity to partnership with his project, and to subvert this redemption is to defy, even blaspheme God.

I want to mention the latter part of an essay by Lynn White that rarely is mentioned. He says that "since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not." He then concludes, "I propose Francis [of Assisi] as a patron saint for ecologists."

This is the St. Francis who befriended wolves and helped worms across the roads when it rained. This is the Christian saint who coined the song that ends: "Be praised my Lord, for Sister Earth, our Mother, Who nourishes and gives us food and fodder, And the green grass and flowers of every color."

The creation is our fellow creature, and we partner with her in praising God.

Multi-faith confessions

There is no single cause to the damage we have done to Sister Earth, our fellow creature. Many non-Christian cultures have been equally negligent with the earth, and conversely there have been numerous dissenting voices in most religious traditions, including Christianity. In fact, the Christian faith can be one helpful spiritual resource in recovering what we have lost.

Let me return to the practice of confession. If the texts speak otherwise, the tradition must confess. It may confess that it has forgotten God and his command to care and rather practiced a different religion. We have made ourselves the

Open-pit mine



Environment



Lulu came over, looked at her face, and looked like she was crying. "You know," Jo Ann explained, "they cry big fat tears."

Then Lulu pushed her way through the door, across the yard, and through the gate that she had never been through without a leash. Then, on the road, witnesses said she would wait until a car came by and then lay down in front of it. She came back to the house a few times to check on Jo Ann until one motorist finally stopped for the prostrate pig and followed it into the house and to the rescue.

Scully tells this story, as do I, to suggest that the world is more than usable objects. The world is

measure of all things, and in our ambition sang a different hymn, "Glory to man in the highest and on earth a higher standard of living for all." We have bought into utilitarian ethics, social Darwinism, technological imperatives, and a secular worldview that assumes the creation to be mere accident, mere thing, an "it" rather than a fellow creature marked with the signature of the divine artist. We have let control and contempt usurp the place of care and compassion.

Confession is good for the soul because it allows one to start fresh again. The forgiveness that comes with repentance is an antidote to the fatalism that otherwise reigns in our culture. It may open us to wonder.

The wonder of pigs

I want to mention a book I stumbled upon last week: Matthew Scully's *Dominion: The Power of Man, the Suffering of Animals, and the Call to Mercy* (2002). Scully is an investigative journalist who believes our best hope lies in realizing the unique responsibility of human beings on this earth. As senior partners in creation, we have sorely missed our calling. We have given in to seeing ourselves as the centre, rather than as commissioned agents with a specific task.

I want to tell one story he relates because it hints that the world is not merely "for us", but is laden with mysteries and wonders that ought to command our attention and respect. All creatures declare a subtle glory.

This is the story of Lulu the pig, the pet of a Jo Ann of Pittsburgh. Jo Ann had a heart attack in her trailer one day, and fell to the floor in the kitchen. She said to the news reporter that she lay there calling, "Somebody help me, help me, call an ambulance" and

charged with the grandeur of God, as Hopkins insisted, and although "all bears man's smudge," "there lives the dearest freshness of deep down things." He was not thinking of pigs as he wrote that, but, well, pigs can be beautiful – and funny, too. It is not sentimental to suggest that giant factory farms where thousands of pigs are herded, without seeing the light of day or feeling human touch are not God's intention for his world. We must find creative ways to produce food that are regulated neither by cold, cruel methods or sentimental drivel.

Let me end on a personal note. I grew up in Toronto, and walked across Yonge Street to get to school. Yet the Don River basin and its forests were my playground, and my refuge from the traffic. We all have our special places, our treasured spots that continue to nourish us through life. They are our window to the bigger picture of God's world.

I offered such a window opportunity for students this last winter, dog sledding in Algonquin Park. It was a chance to be lost for three days in wonder with dogs, snow, and the deep down freshness of crisp northern air. City people, even academic types, can be nurtured by a special experience that opens them to wonder and care, to see creation as a fellow creature of our common Creator. Not to wonder and care in some general way, but with specific, even local landscapes in mind.

[I ended by reading a poem called "Manifesto: Mad Farmer Liberation Front" by Christian poet-farmer Wendell Berry.]

[A version of this piece was used in both a student "Eco-Summit" on Brock University's campus as well as at an Inter-faith "One World: Faith and the Environment" symposium.]

On the Energy Efficiency of our Personal Vehicles

John Cook

The known reserves of petroleum appear to be diminishing, and many researchers and analysts are taking a careful look at the ways we use it. In North America, transportation is responsible for about a third of our demand for petroleum. How efficient are the internal combustion engines that power our personal cars and trucks?

Some answers to this question were provided in a piece in the June 2003 issue of *Road and Track*. Its author, Dennis Simanaitis, summarized two papers presented at the February 2003 Congress of the Society for Automotive Engineers, on the efficiency of various power train technologies. He showed that the efficiency of conventional spark-ignited internal combustion engines is about 12%.

This number seemed very low to me; I would have guessed it to be near 30%. Intrigued, I looked into *Road and Track's* two sources, and found the more interesting paper to be written by two researchers at the Mechanical Engineering Department at the University of Alberta, Matthew Atkins and Bob Koch. Their paper is entitled "A Well to Wheel Comparison of Several Powertrain Technologies," (SAE 2003-01-0081).

Improving engine efficiency

Atkins and Koch look into the efficiency of the process of getting fuel to the vehicle ("well to tank"), the efficiency of fuel usage of the vehicle itself ("tank to wheel"), and the total efficiency ("well to wheel"). For brevity, I consider here only their vehicle data.

Atkins and Koch calculate the fuel usage of various concept power trains, using sophisticated modeling based on actual vehicles. Their model vehicles were identical except for the power source and means of fuel storage. They were "driven" over a standard route including both city and highway.

The basis of comparison is a concept vehicle powered by a Saturn 1.9L engine, with a five speed manual transmission and standard catalyst. This vehicle would be very similar to the majority of cars and small trucks in use today. Its tank to wheel efficiency was found to be 11.7%. Atkins and Koch looked for ways of improving the efficiency of this ubiquitous type of engine. They found that reducing the displacement of the engine, supercharging, and adding variable valve timing, using available technology, increased the efficiency to 14.7%, for a relative and substantial increase of 26%.

The diesel vehicle incorporated the Mercedes 1.7L turbo diesel with manual transmission; its efficiency was calculated to be a little better than 14%.

A hybrid electric vehicle based on the Toyota Prius achieved an efficiency of 18%.

The hydrogen fuel cell vehicle was configured to give a range similar to that of the other vehicles. Its tank to wheel efficiency was about 24%. But the efficiency of producing the hydrogen required ("well to tank") was near 56% (see *Road and Track*), well below that of the production of gasoline, which was near 81%. These vehicles also need intensive development.

Thus, looking only at vehicles available today, the efficiency of a conventional car engine was just below 12%, the diesel was substantially better, and the Prius achieved an efficiency about 50% better, in relative terms.

Is it responsible?

How might we regard these numbers? I find the 12% figure to be shockingly low. How on earth can we justify using such vehicles? The reader will want to make his or her own judgment, but let me make the following comments.

First, the maximum thermal efficiency of these engines is about 30%; that is all we are going to get. (The maximum thermal efficiency of diesels is about 10% higher.) We should not compare an engine to a house furnace achieving an efficiency of, say, 85%. A furnace generates no power and turns no wheels.

On the other hand, keep in mind the amount of fuel an average car uses. A weekly usage of 50 liters of gasoline comes to about 2.3 tons each year. The Atkins-Koch data imply that, in strictly energy terms, almost all of this is wasted. (Furthermore, in an engine this gasoline combines with oxygen in the air to produce about 5.7 tons of carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas.)

Finally, petroleum is both a uniquely concentrated source of energy and a source of valuable chemicals. Is it wise to use such vast quantities of it with an efficiency near 12%?

Should the reader answer in the negative, she or he can purchase a diesel powered vehicle today, or a Prius, and achieve substantially better efficiencies. A vehicle bought today should last for about ten years or so, a period of time over which we can expect substantial adverse changes in the energy scene.

APRIL 26, 2004

Faith Journey

Enthusiastically Calvinistic

Tymen Hofman

Joe Ivory is an amazing man. I've only known him a couple of months but I am so deeply impressed with him that I must tell you his story. I got to know him through his brother and sister-in-law, Sean and Leah Ivory who are fellow members of mine at Neland Ave. CRC here in Grand Rapids.

Sean also has a good story. He met Leah in a public high school in western Illinois, where they played piano together. When Leah went to Calvin College, Sean eventually joined her there, but not at all to become a Calvinist. He was brought up as a Roman Catholic and had become a somewhat nondescript evangelical in the meantime. But after being exposed to the Reformed tradition, Sean became an enthusiastic convert to Calvinism. He is also an outstanding musician who once was the accompanist for the Three Irish Tenors on a tour of the United States. He teaches music and is a highly acclaimed choir conductor in this area. I could do a whole article on him and Leah but I must get to Joe.

Hitting bottom

Like Sean, Joe was brought up Catholic but became aware of the way of salvation through his mother's leaving the RCC and joining an evangelical fellowship. He was amazed to discover a biblical way of salvation and he began to read the Bible. It was all new and exciting for him, but like the seed that fell on shallow soil, it didn't last. When he was exposed to the glitz and glamor of life on the fast track, Joe took off and lived it to the max. Much of his six-page testimony could have been written by the Prodigal Son of Luke 15. There wasn't anything in the way of loose and licentious living that Joe didn't try. His tattooed body is a telling testimony to his life-style in those years.

Through it all, Joe was always at the top of his class, spending three years in the US Army where he advanced in rank and accomplishment until he left the army to return to college. But his debauchery finally got him down. He suffered personal tragedy when the woman carrying his baby left him for another man and had an abortion. Not long after that he hit bottom.

At that point Joe sought the help of a pastor in the Evangelical Free Church, and after a soul-searching encounter with the Scripture he finally met a waiting Father who welcomed back his prodigal son.

"I finally realized how black and evil my heart had become and how terrible my sin was to a Holy God. I finally realized how much I insulted the Lord by turning my back on his mercy and loving and pursuing my own lusts and ambition. But most of all, I finally realized how much the Lord loved me."



Charles Hodge

He was smitten by a verse from the Bible: "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves as a father the son he delights in." (Proverbs 3:11-12)

From there it was all walking in the light of God's grace in Christ.

Debate on justification

Now Joe could not get enough of the Word as he directed his life into Christian service. As a student at the University of Iowa he became involved in a church-planting ministry with the Plymouth Brethren, all led by students like himself, with no pastoral help. He also became a street preacher. He read theological material voraciously. In preparing for a debate on justification with a Roman Catholic student he was led to read some Reformed theology, including Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology* on justification. The debate ended up being an embarrassment for the other guy. Joe had been warned against "that Reformed stuff" by his mentor but it was precisely that stuff that drew him and convinced him that this was a marvelous scriptural insight into God's working to save the world.

At this point there was no stopping Joe from immersing himself fully in Reformed theology and a Reformed church fellowship. He and his wife Julie became members of the Presbyterian Church in America where he is working in evangelism. He preaches by invitation in various churches and is seeking license to preach in the PCA. As a dental student at the University of Iowa, he hopes soon to graduate, then do dental service in the US Army and finally to graduate from a seminary. He hopes eventually to settle in a place to work in church planting as well as practice his profession. In the meantime, he is deeply involved in a ministry to young people.

He is also jubilant that the Lord has blessed him and Julie with a daughter. He is

Just a toe in the water

Bonny Mulder-Behnia

Easter morning, 8:00 a.m. "California Sunrise Service," the worshipers have already filled the sanctuary. About a half-hour into the service we meet a young man, early 20s, who is dressed in his nicest shirt and pants, wearing sunglasses, his hair slicked back, carrying a Starbucks cup. He's made it through the door of church.

He even stepped into the sanctuary, stood behind the back row of chairs, and was speaking comments out loud. I don't know what he said, but the head usher kindly summoned him back into the entryway and asked how he's doing in an attempt to start conversation. Then he signaled for me to step up and join the discussion.

"This young man says it's his first time here today – in fact, his first time back to church since he was a little boy in Sunday School." I looked at this young man and saw through God's eyes that little boy whose faith was frozen in time. He came looking for the God he met in Sunday School 16 years earlier. But now he didn't know what to do next.

I asked about his childhood church experience, which he summarized as riding a big green bus to a Southern Baptist church. He said he's been wanting to come back to church (he lives just around the corner), but never got up the nerve until today. But then he said he thinks he's at the wrong church – he was supposed to meet a friend here, and he doesn't see her, so maybe he'll come back another time. Uh-huh.

I think he got cold feet. He felt like a fish out of water. I smelled the alcohol on his breath and knew that his Starbucks cup didn't contain coffee. That didn't make

me think any less of him, but suddenly helped me understand what a big step it was for him to get this far. To move from a desire to go to church to actually putting on his Sunday best and bringing his body through the door. But that was as far as he was going to go on this particular day.

We told him that we're glad he came, and hoped to see him again. I told him that I have two kids in their early 20s who were brought up going to Sunday school and church, too, but that they don't attend church very often these days. But, I said, I believe with all my heart that God has his hand on their lives and that they'll be back.

Then I looked at him and said, "I just want you to know that wherever you go, whatever you do, God doesn't let go of you. He's waiting patiently for you to come back to him because ever since your childhood he's laid a claim on your life."

"Woah," he said as he took a step back, "I don't want to get that deep! I'm just barely putting my toe in the water!"

I just smiled at him and said, "Yes, I know. It's all about baby steps and you're headed in the right direction. I just want you to know that you're in God's hands and that he'll take you back whenever you're ready."

He shook our hands and left, saying that he'll try to make it back. He'll try.

Of all the people I met Easter Sunday, he's the one on my heart this morning. He's the one who took one of the biggest steps to get inside that door – even with a little boost of courage from his Starbucks cup.

What a huge privilege to witness God at work.

awed by the responsibility of bringing up their little girl in a covenant home. The prodigal has, indeed, become a true son of the Father.

Squandering their inheritance

Now all of this is impressive from the point of view of the Lord bringing a sinner to himself. But the story has another important angle that we ought not to pass over. It is that Joe Ivory has discovered and is reveling in the reality of the Reformed faith and world view at just the time when large numbers of "insiders" are walking away from the Reformed camp and embracing a shallow fundamentalism and the mega-church mentality and fellowship.

That is beyond the comprehension of Joe Ivory as it is beyond mine. He says: "I am saddened by the fact that many young people are squandering their inheritance of the Reformed tradition for cisterns that will not hold water. It is tragic, because for all the glitz and glamour of the mega-church movement, the anemic theological founda-

tions and epistemology that lies at the root of American "pop" Christianity will leave them naked and defenseless when they face the coming onslaught of Islam."

Joe is at this point waxing prophetic in his view of the future crises awaiting the Christian church. We can hope he is wrong but the possibility of his being correct should bring some of our leaders to seriously reassess their churchmanship. But right or wrong about Islam, Joe has good advice for today's preachers who are traveling full-bore into the numbers game and feel-good worship. I would like to recruit Joe Ivory for the ministry of the CRC!

Ty Hofman is a Yankee-Canuck and retired minister of the Christian Reformed Church, living in Grand Rapids, Mich.



Opinion



Yes... but

Bert Hielema

First, Vietnam. It has a history going back thousands of years. It was a French colony since mid 19th century. In vain the French tried to hang on to the country in the 1950's. When the Americans in the 1960's feared that a Communist regime there would lead to a domino affect all over Asia, it chose, in the name of freedom, to invade and fight the Vietcong. The French general, Marshall Leclerc, who had commanded the French army there, warned them that defeating North Vietnam would take half a million men and "even then it could not be done." But the USA went ahead anyway.

Barbara Tuchman, who devoted a good deal of her book, *The March of Folly* to Vietnam writes that ignorance of Vietnam's history, traditions and national character led to the fiasco there. American policy makers took it for granted that, in dealing with a backward people, mighty America would prevail. She writes, "Wooden-headedness, the 'Don't-confuse-me-with-the-fact' habit is a universal folly never more conspicuous than at the upper levels of Washington with respect to Vietnam."

The same line now applies to Iraq. From World War II we know that human casualties are bearable when they are believed to have served a purpose. However, these same experiences evoked extreme bitterness when, as in the case of Vietnam, 45,000 Americans were killed and 300,000 wounded, sacrificed for nothing. Plus millions of Vietnamese.

And Iraq? History is repeated. The White House's approach to Iraq is also typified by an arrogance of power. In both cases there was a curious vacuum of understanding the consequences, combined with the same cultural ignorance evident in Vietnam: typical components of folly.

Vietnam led to a 'soul' crisis for the USA, a mental depression. However, since times became prosperous, America was able to overcome the emotional and financial burdens and lived to see great material prosperity. Social systems can survive a good deal of folly when circumstances are historically favorable or when bungling is cushioned by large resources. Thanks to a long period of economic expansion the aftermath of Vietnam faded away.

Iraq was supposed to prove that the nation had regained its psychological balance. Iraq is not Vietnam: it is worse. Both were waged to wrest the people away from bad regimes. In either case America's leadership pre-supposed that oppressed people would be prepared to fight for their 'freedom' and welcome democracy, the refrain the USA president has been drilled to repeat.

Iraqis know their own tortuous history. There is a country patched together at the end of a gun barrel by the previous colonizer, the Brits. After World War I, they wanted to exploit the oil rather than pro-

duce a harmonious, let alone democratic, society.

Until that time it had been part of the Ottoman Empire for about 600 years. This regime dominated South Eastern Europe – including Hungary – as well as the Middle East and North Africa, from 1350 or so, but, when Sulaiman, the Magnificent as he was called, died in 1566, the empire suffered a steady decline and collapsed in 1918.

In Vietnam the USA could count on the South more or less. In Iraq the US assumed that the Shiites, Southern Iraq, would welcome them with flowers and kisses. That did not happen, but at least the majority was not against the Americans in the beginning. However, after a year the Americans are seen as occupiers and resented as such. The catalyst came when the rulers in Baghdad closed a Shiite newspaper and arrested an aid to a radical religious leader. The current revolt was the result.

Now the American army is fighting both factions of the Muslim population: the Shiites and the Sunnis, former enemies, now united. This could well mean that we see the beginning of the end for the United States. Sure, the US possesses the military might to hang on indefinitely, but only through the continuous sacrifice of lives in a reckless venture that has never had an honestly stated purpose.

We are 30 years after Vietnam and times have changed. We now are approaching something entirely new: the Oil Peak, the Turning Point in world history. That's one reason why Iraq is worse than Vietnam. The other reason is money. Not only does the American economy depend on the willingness of the Muslim Saudis to keep the oil tap open, an increasingly unlikely prospect, as this conflict has become a religious war: America versus world-wide Islam, but it also is dependent on foreigners to finance their life-style.

For this they are at the mercy of China and Japan, who between them hold a trillion dollars of American bonds. If they refuse to buy more, the American dollar will tumble, interests rise and a sure recession the result. America is militarily strong, but economically extremely vulnerable. The United States is now faced with 'imperial overstretch,' leading to its downfall, like imperial Spain in 1600 and the British empire around 1900.

Easter exemplifies Hope.

I am writing this on Easter 2004. Easter exemplifies Hope. And there is a lot I hope for. In Canada I hope for a Liberal minority government. The one condition the Socialist NDP has for joining such a cabinet – and they are the only possibility – is proportional representation, where each party gets seats according to the percentage of votes received. That is true(er) democracy.

For the USA I hope that John Kerry will

pick John McCain, the Republican senator from Arizona, as his running mate. The problems the world face are so immense that only a unified bi-partisan approach will have a chance to turn the tide. I have – by the way – given the John Kerry campaign a donation via the Internet. The first time I have ever given money to an American politician. I hope that Bush will be defeated.

There is also hopeful news for men: prostate cancer, that dreaded word, with its ominous ring, is largely preventable! According to the Prostate Cancer Institute, one in eight men will contract this mysterious male malady. I saw a graph a while ago depicting both the incidence of breast cancer in women and prostate cancer in men: while breast cancer is leveling off, prostate problems have now surpassed that dreaded female affliction.

A.S.S. – almonds, sunflower seeds, spinach

In the years to come there won't be enough money to finance passive healing, that is fixing physical failures after they have been found. We all must strive for active healing: prevention. In one of the studies presented to the annual meeting of the American Association of Cancer Research in Orlando, Stephanie Weinstein of the US National Cancer Institute and colleagues found that men with the lowest risk of prostate cancer had the most vitamin E in their systems, of which the best is found in the stuff you eat, in this case alpha tocopherol, predominantly available in such foods as almonds, sunflower seeds and spinach. This makes for an easily remembered acronym. So my simple prescription is: to give prostate problems a pass, always remember A.S.S. – Almonds, Sunflower seeds, Spinach. Dr Weinstein also pointed out that other nuts and seeds, as well as whole grain products, vegetable oils, salad dressings, beans, peas and other vegetables are good dietary sources of vitamin E. Of course, you can use the vitamin capsule as well – I do daily – but they are not rated as effective.

Easter Island

Easter has come and gone, but not the hope that exemplifies Easter. I hope that what has happened on Easter Island will serve as a warning.

Easter Island, you say? It was discovered on Easter day April 5, 1722 by Jacob Roggeveen, a Dutch explorer. The island is the most remote piece of real estate in the world, 3,700 km west of Chile in the Pacific and 2,000 km East of Pitcairn Islands, closer to New Zealand. (Also a Dutch discovery). Captain Roggeveen found this island totally barren, no trees, no firewood, few species of plant life, and no creatures larger than insects and a few animal-like humans.

What the island did have was huge, elaborately constructed, stone statues. Roggeveen and his crew were completely perplexed by these strange figures, some as tall as 20 meters and weighing 270 tons. Whoever built them had tools, resources, and far advanced organizational skills. What happened to these people?

According to archeologists, Easter Island was first colonized by Polynesians sometime around the year 500 AD. At the time, the island was a pristine paradise with lush forests and lots of streams and animals: a virtual paradise. Under these conditions, the island's population grew to as much as 20,000. They used the wood for fuel, canoes, and houses – and, of course, for transporting the huge statues.

With each passing year, the islanders had to cut down more and more trees as the statues became larger and larger. As the trees disappeared, springs and streams dried up, and so did the food supply and, in the end, the islanders resorted to cannibalism to keep themselves alive, while living in caves for protection against their former neighbors. In their anger toward their gods many statues were overturned.

The UCLA Medical School Professor Jared Diamond, discussing two books about this island, wonders in the current issue of *The New York Review* "Why were the Easter Islanders so foolish?... What did he who cut down the last tree say? Like modern loggers did he shout "Jobs, not trees!" Or: "Technology will solve our problems, never fear we'll find a substitute for wood."

Continues Dr Diamond: "The parallel between Easter Island and the modern world is chillingly obvious. Thanks to globalization, international trade, jet planes and the Internet, all countries on earth share resources and affect each other just as the 20,000 on Easter Island, a place just as isolated in the Pacific Ocean as the earth today in space.... These are the reasons why people see the Easter Island society as a metaphor, a worst-case scenario, for what may lie ahead for us in our future."

We have only one earth from which there is no escape. We all are "Left Behind." I hope that during this past Easter there may have been some preachers among the ten of thousands in North America who have made a reference to this Easter Island story or environmental degradation on Easter Sunday and have cautioned their parishioners to live within the means of creation so that the "Easter Island" tragedy will not become a prelude for our tomorrow.

If this was the case, let me know: hielema@allstream.net

Bert Hielema lives in
Tweed, Ontario.



Beliefs/Business Directory

Efforts to unite Christians, Muslims undermine the Gospel, say panelists

David Roach

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — Should Christians view Muslims as monotheistic allies in the culture wars?

Not according to panelists at a symposium sponsored by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Carl F.H. Henry Institute for Evangelical Engagement.

The panelists, depicting Allah as fundamentally different than the God of Christianity, said efforts to unite Islam and Christianity threaten to compromise the Gospel.

The symposium featured seminary President R. Albert Mohler Jr.; Russell D. Moore, assistant professor of Christian theology and executive director of the Henry Institute; and Ergun Caner, associate professor of theology and history at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va.

Not the same God

More than 500 people listened as panelists responded to Peter Kreeft's book, *Ecumenical Jihad*, in which he argues that Christians and Muslims hold many beliefs in common as monotheists and must unite in the fight against secularism. Fighting between the two religions, Kreeft writes, unnecessarily detracts from positive work

that could be accomplished.

Caner, who was a Muslim for 20 years before committing his life to Christ, described Kreeft's view as ignoring irreconcilable differences between Islam and Christianity."

To say that our ... monotheistic religions worship the same God, that as sons of Abraham we can unite on a common cause of this said God against the threat of humanism, in my mind ignores the central tenets of each system and insults the adherents of each system," said Caner.

Though Muslims believe that Allah is the sovereign creator, they deny other facets of the Christian doctrine of God such as the Trinity and the deity of Christ. "It is not the same God," he said. "The Koran is explicit not to say Trinity.... We're not talking about the same God."

In fact, Islamic eschatology teaches that one day Jesus will return to "break all the crosses" and "kill and send to hell every Jew and Christian who did not accept Allah," Caner said. "As much as I would love for there to be ... unity, you cannot unite with those who seek your death for the sole reason of your conversion."

Mohler, in his comments, said

Kreeft's thesis stems from a false notion that all monotheists share a common worldview.

Prior to Vatican II, a pivotal Roman Catholic council in the 1960s, it was commonly acknowledged that Christianity and Islam hold contradictory theologies, Mohler said. After Vatican II, it became popular to lump all monotheistic religions into one category."

Vatican II went so far as officially to embrace all monotheists as sons of Abraham and included in God's economy of salvation," Mohler said. "This means Christians and Jews and Muslims."

Among the sharp differences between Christianity and Islam, as noted by Mohler: Christianity's insistence on the full deity of Christ versus Islam's denial that God could ever have a son."

The issue ... is the doctrine of the Trinity, in particular the doctrine of Christ," Mohler said. "We must face the fundamental question of how one knows the one true and living God. The Scripture is abundantly clear that God is known through Jesus Christ the Son."

Islam, in contrast, insists that "Allah is one, and he has no son," Mohler said. "The only ground of our Christian identity is ... the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord."

Efforts at waging the great battles of the age, he said, are "fundamentally limited to those who believe and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

Because God reveals moral standards through human conscience, Christians and Muslims will agree on some cultural issues, Mohler noted. But the two religions will never unite fully because Muslims reject God's authoritative revelation, the Bible.

"When we come to revelation, it's not just any book," he said. "It is the holy Scriptures. It is explicitly not the Koran, which is explicitly a different worldview." Common ground "from time to time on limited issues we understand by common grace," he said. "A common platform to address the culture war? I think not. The seductive nature of that idea makes it all the more dangerous."

Moore said Muslims also misunderstand the fatherhood of God.

God's fatherhood

"God the Father does not simply mean that God is caring," Moore said. "God the Father, in Scripture, is a specific truth claim that God is the Father of Jesus Christ. We cannot start with some generic concept of God and then move to a fuller revelation in Jesus

Christ. God reveals himself as Father, Son, Holy Spirit and as the God and Father of Jesus Christ."

Although some thinkers minimize the distinctions between Islam and Christianity, Scripture teaches that only followers of Christ will inherit eternal life, Moore said.

"The issues here are about more than foreign policy, although foreign policy is at stake," he said.

"The issue is about more than the culture wars although the culture wars are at stake. The issue is billions and billions of people for whom Christ died, who right now are chanting, 'There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.'"

Moore concluded, "I fear for us in evangelical Christianity that there are so many of us who want peace with Islam, and by peace what we mean is that they would stop killing us so that we can continue to consume our stuff. That is not what peace is as defined by the New Testament.

Peace is John 3:16. ... For millions and millions of Muslims, peace — being defined as being ignored by the Gospel — is hell. If we love Muslims as we love ourselves, we will take the Gospel to the ends of the earth."

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Birth	Anniversaries
<p>"Sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done marvelous things" Psalm 98:1a</p> <p>With thankfulness to God, Pastor Stephen & Cindy Tamming are happy to announce the birth of their third daughter Sarah Ashley born on March 8, 2004. She is a sister to Nicole and Meagan and the granddaughter of Ben & Cristina Klein-Geltink and Johan & Hilda Tamming.</p> <p>Address: 52 Suncoast Drive West Goderich ON N7A 1X1</p>	<p>50th Wedding Anniversary</p> <p>May 5, 1954 May 5, 2005 Wedding Text – Psalm 119:105 "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path"</p> <p>PETER AND GERTRUDE SCHUURMANS (née DeRoos)</p> <p>The children and grandchildren wish to give thanks to the Lord for many years of faithful love he has given Mom and Dad (Pake & Beppe).</p> <p>Neil Schuurmans, Vancouver BC Bill & Margaret Schuurmans, Hallville ON Robin & Lori John & Anita Schuurmans, Munster Hamlet ON Christopher & Gregory Ann Schuurmans, Cliff Bolter, Ottawa ON Gertie Schuurmans, Ottawa ON Oscar & Nancy Schuurmans, Carleton Place ON Caitlin</p> <p>Cards & letters may be sent to their home address: 220 Viewmount Drive Apt. 123 Nepean ON K2E 7M5</p>

Personal	Obituaries
<p>Widow in late 60's would like to meet a sincere Christian man. Reply to: <i>Christian Courier</i> File #2740 1 Hiscott St. St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7</p>	<p>PAUL AND JOHANNA DROPPERT (née Van Zanten) Wedding text: Matthew 19:6b</p> <p>We pray that the Lord will continue to bless you and keep you both in his care.</p> <p>With love and congratulations from Martin & Elly Boerefyn, Grimsby, Ontario Tim & fiancée Davi, Jeff & Maria, Lisa & Cody, Stephen & Natalie, Carolyn & Elliott, Sarah & Irvin, Jennifer, Richard Corrie & Piet Snieder, Holyrood, Ontario Michelle & Gary, Johanna, Nicholas Leo & Beatrice Droppert, Wainfleet, Ontario Jason & Beth Ann, Jeremy & Tara, Tim & fiancée Laura, Joshua Paul & Diane Droppert, Vineland, Ontario Rachel & Paul, David, Bryan, Stephen and 11 great-grandchildren</p> <p>Open House will be on May 8th, 2004 from 2 - 5 p.m. at their home address: 136 Mountain Rd, Grimsby ON L3M 4E7</p>

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Obituaries

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II Timothy 4:7, 8a
"I have fought the good fight, I have
finished the race, I have kept the faith.
Now there is in store for me
the crown of righteousness."

Peacefully on Friday March 26, 2004

PATRICIA (Vanderwiel) BOEYENGA
in her 99th year,
went home to be with her Lord.
Beloved wife of the late John Boeyenga.
Dear mother of:
Everett & Carla Boeyenga
Barbara Duiker & Jack Duiker
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Gertie & Neil Minnema
Ann & David Williams
Janet & Dirk Dykstra

Predeceased by her oldest son Jim and
youngest son Joey Boeyenga.
Survived by Joyce & John Rozema (Jim),
Ann & Brian Nicolai (Joey).
"Beppe" and "Oer Beppe" to 28 grand-
children and 38 great-grandchildren,
also survived by one sister Anke
Vanderwiel in the Netherlands.

The funeral was held March 29th at
the First Christian Reformed Church in
Kingston, Ontario.
A Celebration Of A Life Well Lived

Correspondence: E. Boeyenga
13 Aleda St, Barrie ON L4N 2A2

March 31, 1930 March 25, 2004

The Lord called unto himself
our dear husband, father, grandfather
and great-grandfather

BERT VANSOELEN

Although we know that he is
celebrating with his heavenly Father,
an empty spot is left here on earth.

Beloved friend and husband of nearly
45 years to Aleda (née Zantlingh).
Dear father, grandfather and great-
grandfather to:
Carolyn & Martin Hamming, Smithville
Alicia, Kimberly, Robert, Chris, Ben
Ann & Alfred Kiers, Wainfleet
Karl & Steve & Alanna Heeg,
Danielle, Jody, Megan, Terry
Bernice & Fred Geerlinks, Smithville
Adam, Scott, Jason, Jeffery
Janet & Anthony Snippe, Lowbanks
Matthew, Rebecca, Sarah, Ryan,
Mariah
Clarence VanSoeien, Dunnville
Henry & Grace VanSoeien, Wellandport
Colin, Kelly, Caleb

Funeral service was led by Pastor
Derek Bouma at the Riverside CRC in
Wellandport on March 29, 2004.

Rom. 8:38-39; "Nothing ... will be able
to separate us from the love of God..."

Mailing address: A. VanSoeien
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Wat is er mooier om deze week naar Schoonoord te komen met vakantie en dan tevens de oude bekenden de hand te drukken, en het glas te heffen op ons mooi dorp.

Het programma is nog niet definitief maar een foto expositie mag natuurlijk niet ontbreken. Dus heeft U nog oude foto's zend die dan voorzien van naam en adres zodat ze weer bij de rechtmatige eigenaar terug bezorgd kunnen worden. Aansluitend is er een revue in de grote feesttent.

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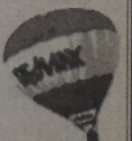
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Princeton - CHOR	8:00 am	1400
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Vernon - CJIB	9:30 pm	94

ALBERTA

Brooks - CIBQ	8:30 am	1340
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High River - CHRB	6:30 pm	1140
Edmonton - CICA	6:00 pm	930
Westlock - CFOK	7:30 am	1370

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Steinbach - CHSM	9:30 am	1250
Winnipeg - CKJS	9:00 am	810

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Atikokan - CFAK	9:30 am	1240
Chatham - CFCE	6:30 am	630
Guelph - CJOY	8:30 am	1460
Hamilton - CHAM	7:30 am	820
Kapuskasing - CKAP	7:00 am	580

London - CKSL	7:00 am	1410
Oshawa - CKDO	8:00 am	1350
Owen Sound - CFOS	7:00 am	560
Pembroke - CHVR	10:00am	96.7
Sarnia - CHOK	7:30 am	1070
Stratford - CJCS	8:45 am	1240
Windsor - CKLW	7:30 am	800
Wingham - CKNX	10:30am	920

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Charlottetown - CFCY	7:00 am	630
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NOVA SCOTIA

Bridgewater - CKBW	7:30 am	1000
Digby - CKDY	6:00 am	1420
Halifax - CFDR	8:30 am	780
Liverpool - CKBW	7:30 am	94.5
Kentville - CKEN	8:30 am	1490
Middleton - CKAD	8:30 am	1350
New Glasgow - CKEC	7:30 am	1320
Shelburne - CKBW	7:30 am	93.1
Sydney - CJCIB	7:00 am	1270
Weymouth - CKDY	8:30 am	103.1
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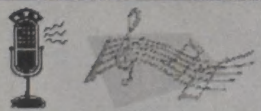
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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Items appearing in this column are run free of charge if they advertise an admission-free event, if they accompany an ad for the same event, or at the discretion of CC.
In case of free listing, space limitations apply.
The charge otherwise is \$7.50 per line, or \$1.50 per 1/3 line, per insertion.

- Apr 18, 24, 25 Hebron CRC, Whitby, Ontario**, 50th anniversary celebrations. See ad next issue or phone 1-905-655-5020 or website www.hebroncrc.ca for more info
- Apr 24 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group** presents "De Avond van de zevende Juli" 8 pm at the Jordan Christian Heritage School. Phone 519-283-6285 or 519-539-8940 for more info.
- Apr 24 The MEN OF PRAISE** (from Woodstock) in concert, at the Ebenezer CRC, **Jarvis Ont.**, at 7:30 pm. Freewill offering.
- Apr 24 Festival of Praise:** Male Choirs from Brampton, Hamilton, York, Simcoe & St. Catharines. 7:30 pm. at Covenant CRC, 278 Parnell St. **St. Catharines**. For tickets (\$10) and info, call 905-934-1348. See ad this issue for more information.
- Apr 30 Knevel Duo in Concert:** Andre Knevel and son Andrew will be presenting Christian music on organ and piano on Friday 8 pm. at the Rehoboth United Reformed Church, 77 Glancaster Rd, **Ancaster**. Tickets at the door. For info: Louis Andela at (905)765-6124. See ad this issue.
- Apr 30 The First Royal Dutch Treat** will take place at the Liberty Grand, Exhibition Place in **Toronto, Ontario**. See ad March 29 issue for more information or see www.royaldutchtreat.ca
- Apr 30, May 2 John Calvin CRC, Truro, Nova Scotia** 50th anniversary. Former ministers, members and friends are invited to a celebration potluck dinner & program Friday, and Sunday service. For more information call (902) 897-2083 or aalkema@ns.sympatico.ca
- May 1 Pro Musica Choir** Conductor: Brent Fifield, presents *O Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem*, Darke: *Mass in E, Psalm 43* by Mendelssohn, *Psalm 104* by Glick. Also selections by Ramisch, Purcell and Howells. Organist: Bruce Kirkpatrick Hill. 8:00 pm at Port Nelson United Church, 3132 South Drive, **Burlington ON** Adults \$12.00 Senior/Student \$8.00 Family (16 and under) \$30.00 Add \$2.00 at the door. For info call: 905 632 1347 or visit www.promusicachoir.org
- May 2 Concert of Sacred Music by St. Thomas Cresendo Male Choir** 7:30 pm Knox Presbyterian Church 55 Hincks St, **St. Thomas**. Freewill offering for Canadian Bible Society. (519)637-4357
- May 2 Guelph Spring Festival** presents duo organists **Jan Overduin & Jonathan Oldengarm** in concert at 3:00 pm. A pre-concert chat will be held at 2:30 pm. Both events at St. George's Anglican Church, 99 Woolwich Street, **Guelph, ON**. For tickets and information, call the River Run Centre Box Office at 519-763-3000 or 1-877-520-2408, or visit www.guelphspringfestival.org
- May 7 Calgary Society of Organists** presents **Jonathan Oldengarm** in concert, 8:00 pm., at Grace Presbyterian Church, **Calgary, AB**. For information call 403-249-0764. Single tickets are \$15 and single student/senior tickets are \$10.
- May 12 50th anniversary** of the Bowmanville, Ottawa, & Quinte Region **Lady's Society**. Convention at Day's Inn, 33 Benson St, **Kingston, ON**. See ad this issue for details.
- May 14-16 Immanuel Christian School, 50th anniversary**, 15 Caverly Rd, **Aylmer, Ont.** See ad this issue or website: www.amtelecom.net/~immanuel/ics.html
- May 15 Retirement Open House** for Albert Dreise from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m., at Calvary CRC, Hwy #8 & Middletown Rd. **West Flamborough**
- May 15,16 Sarnia First Christian Reformed Church, 70th Anniversary**. Contact firstcra@xcelco.on.ca for more information, or call 519-336-8808.
- May 18 National organ competition winner Jonathan Oldengarm** plays monumental works of the French romantics on the great Casavant organ at St. Mary's Basilica, Spring Garden Road at Barrington Street, **Halifax NS, 8:00 pm**. For tickets and information, call the St. Cecilia Concert Series Box Office at 902-420-4085, or visit www.stcecilia.ca.
- May 29 First Christian Reformed Church of Montreal** will celebrate its **50th anniversary**. Ph: 1-514-684-4430 or E-mail: georgelucy@aei.ca
- June 8 Hollandse Dag** 10 a.m. at the **Moorefield** Community Centre. See ad this issue.



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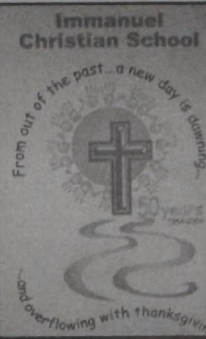
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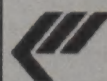
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News

Dozens of churches destroyed in latest violence in Kosovo



Church of St. Elias in Podujevo

Harry der Nederlanden

"The West raised a cry of outrage when the Taliban destroyed a religious site in Afghanistan. Why isn't there a similar outcry when dozens of ancient Orthodox churches are destroyed by Muslim Albanians all across Kosovo?" ask Orthodox Christians in Kosovo, many of whom have been chased from their homes, which were then looted and destroyed behind them.

Ethnic cleansing is happening once again all across Kosovo. This time, however, it is the Albanians who are systematically rooting out the enclaves of Serbs who haven't yet been harried out of their homes. A large share of the destruction has targeted the religious symbols of the Serbs, who are predominantly Eastern Orthodox; Muslim mobs have destroyed dozens of Christian churches, cemeteries and monasteries. A number of churches that had already been desecrated and damaged earlier were now blown up and completely reduced to rubble.

Targeting Christian heritage

Thirty-one people have been killed and more than 40 religious sites, mostly churches, have been destroyed in the large-scale violence which erupted March 17 and went on for two days. The authorities in Kosovo, largely Albanian Muslim, have taken very little action against the perpetrators of the violence.

The immediate cause of this latest violence was reported to be the drowning of two Albanian boys. However it appears that the hostility did not flare up spontaneously, and had in fact been

complete destruction, placing them under "state protection."

Background to the current conflict

Ethnic divisions have always been present in Kosovo. During the Middle Ages the largely nomadic Albanians were treated as a socially inferior class by the Serbs, for whom Kosovo was, at that time, their administrative, military and spiritual heartland. For this reason the region still holds a special place in the collective Serbian consciousness.

The battle of the "Field of Blackbirds" in 1389 changed all that. The Christian Serbs lost to

moved to Kosovo from the South. Though Kosovo was being emptied of Serbs the concept of Serbian nationhood never died and was kept alive throughout the Ottoman period by the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Serbian nationalism

That concept of nationhood evolved in response to the growth of nationalism in Europe. Serbian nationalism quickly took root and asserted itself. Eventually Serbs won independence in 1878 for the area to the north of Kosovo, the new country was named Serbia, even though their traditional heartland (Kosovo) remained under Ottoman control. As the Ottomans became weaker, Serbia was able to wrest control of Kosovo in the 1912-13 Balkan Wars. Once again the tables were turned and ethnic Albanians became those who were oppressed. That changed during World War I, when Albanians took advantage of Austro-Hungary's defeat of the Serbs. There was a

similar scenario during World War II, when the Germans defeated the new Yugoslavia and set up a fascist regime in Albania, to which Kosovo was added.

After 1945 Marshal Tito united Yugoslavia once more, under communism, and supported regional autonomy. Serbs were no longer allowed to settle in Kosovo. During this period the Albanian population of the region tripled to reach 90 percent of the population.

With the fall of communism, nationalism reasserted itself and the various regions of Yugoslavia sought independence. Milosevic too redefined the ruling ideology to a nationalist one, and one that placed great emphasis on securing Kosovo for the Serbs and preventing any moves towards independence. In 1996 the Kosovo Liberation Army began a ruthless campaign of slaughter targeting both Serb security forces and civilians. The responding atrocities that were committed by Serbian militias until 1999 are well documented.



well planned.

Neither is it in fact certain that the boys were actually drowned by Serbs. The added irony is that, while these attacks could be seen as revenge attacks for the Serbian atrocities of the war (which ended in 1999), at least one diocese in Kosovo was very outspoken against former Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic's brutal methods.

Monasteries in this diocese and others were opened up to give ethnic Albanians shelter during the anti-Muslim/Albanian violence. It is these very monasteries that are now being targeted for destruction. The balance of evidence strongly suggests that this latest outbreak of violence is an attempt to "ethnically" cleanse the region of its (largely Serbian) Christian heritage and people.

In apparent retaliation, two mosques were burned last week by mobs in Belgrade, despite the pleas of Serbian church leaders.

Firefighters and police intervened to save the mosques from

the Muslim Ottoman Turks and Kosovo became an administrative region within the Ottoman Empire. Many Albanians adopted Islam and were gradually elevated above the previous Serbian elite to become the new ruling class. As ethnic Albanians attained positions of power over their previous superiors the incentive to adopt Islam no doubt increased even more.

Today virtually all Kosovar Muslims are ethnically Albanian. It is this gradual, but almost total, adoption of Islam that has so deeply entrenched the rift between the two communities. During the Ottoman period Christians in Kosovo (mostly Serbs) lived as second-class citizens (known as dhimmi), discriminated against by the ruling Muslim elite, mostly Albanian. The discrimination often took the form of severe repression, and particularly towards the end of the 19th century there were even outright massacres of Christians. Many Serbian Christians fled their homeland to the North, conversely many more Albanians



St Nicholas destroyed

